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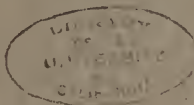
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## STUDIES IN THE WORK OF COLLEY CIBBER

BY

DE WITT C. CROISSANT

*(A part of a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Princeton University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy)*



LAWRENCE, OCTOBER, 1912



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## PREFACE

The following studies are extracts from a longer paper on the life and work of Cibber. No extended investigation concerning the life or the literary activity of Cibber has recently appeared, and certain misconceptions concerning his personal character, as well as his importance in the development of English literature and the literary merit of his plays, have been becoming more and more firmly fixed in the minds of students. Cibber was neither so much of a fool nor so great a knave as is generally supposed. The estimate and the judgment of two of his contemporaries, Pope and Dennis, have been far too widely accepted. The only one of the above topics that this paper deals with, otherwise than incidentally, is his place in the development of a literary mode.

While Cibber was the most prominent and influential of the innovators among the writers of comedy of his time, he was not the only one who indicated the change toward sentimental comedy in his work. This subject, too, needs fuller investigation. I hope, at some future time, to continue my studies in this field.

This work was suggested as a subject for a doctor's thesis, by Professor John Matthews Manly, while I was a graduate student at the University of Chicago a number of years ago, and was continued later under the direction of Professor Thomas Marc Parrott at Princeton. I wish to thank both of these scholars, as well as Professor Myra Reynolds, who first stimulated my interest in Restoration comedy. The libraries of Harvard, Yale, and Columbia have been very generous in supplying books which would otherwise have been inaccessible; but especial gratitude is due to the Library of Congress, and to Mr. Joseph Plass, who called my attention to material in the Library of Congress, which would have escaped my notice but for his interest. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor R. D. O'Leary, of the University of Kansas, who has read these pages in manuscript and in proof, and has offered many valuable suggestions.

D. C. C.

University of Kansas,  
October, 1912.



# STUDIES IN THE WORK OF COLLEY CIBBER

De Witt C. Croissant

## I

### NOTES ON CIBBER'S PLAYS

Colley Cibber's activity was not confined to writing plays. Besides being a leader in the development of comedy and a skilful adapter in tragedy, he was the greatest actor of his day in comic rôles; was the dominant personality in the triumvirate of managers of the playhouse, so that the healthy theatrical conditions of his time were largely due to him; was a writer of poetry, some of which is fairly good; was the author of some of the most amusing and clever controversial pamphlets of the time; and was the author of a most interesting autobiography. Today he is thought of by many merely as the hero of Pope's *Dunciad*. In some respects he deserved Pope's satire, but the things he did well entitle him to more consideration than he has received.

It is the purpose of these *Notes* to discuss merely his plays; and to treat these principally from the point of view of what may be called external relations, with some discussion of dramatic technique. Under the heading of external relations I have considered the dates of the various plays, the circumstances of their presentation, their sources, and their relation to the various types of the drama of the time. I have discussed the plays in chronological order within the various classes.

## 1. FARCES.

Of the farces ascribed to Cibber, only two, *The Rival Queens* and *Bulls and Bears*, are unquestionably his, and these two are not accessible. *The Rival Queens*, acted at the Haymarket, June 29, 1710, printed in Dublin in 1729, is without doubt by Cibber. But in the collected edition of his plays, published in 1777, the editors substituted a farce of the same name, which, however, deals with a different subject and is by another writer. Cibber's farce was a burlesque of Lee's *Rival Queens*; the piece that was substituted deals with the operative situation in England.

An adaptation of Doggett's *Country Wake* (1696), called *Hob, or The Country Wake* (1715), has been ascribed to Cibber, but Genest<sup>1</sup> doubts his authorship because it was brought out while Doggett was still on the stage.

*Bulls and Bears*, Cibber's second undisputed farce, was acted at Drury Lane, December 2, 1715, but was apparently not printed.

*Chuck* (1736) seems to have been ascribed to him by either the author or the publisher without grounds, for in a list of plays "wrote by anonymous authors in the 17th century," appended to the fourth edition of the *Apology* (1756), there is a note on this play to the effect that "the author or printer has set the name of Mr. Cibber to this piece." This is not proof positive that Cibber did not write the play, for *Cinna's Conspiracy*, which is unquestionably by him, appears in the same list. In *The New Theatrical Dictionary* (1742), it is stated that "this piece [*Chuck*] is extremely puerile, yet the author has thought proper to put Mr. Cibber's name to it." This again is not necessarily convincing argument against Cibber's authorship, for he was capable of poor work, as his poems and some of his plays show.

On the whole, it seems probable that *Hob* and *Chuck* are not by Cibber. In any case, they are entirely without value, and it is therefore a matter of no importance to literary history whether their authorship is ever determined or not.

Coffey's *The Devil to Pay* (1736) is stated in the catalogue of the British Museum to have been "revised by Colley Cibber." But the work of revision was done by Theophilus Cibber, his son, and Cibber himself contributed only one song.<sup>2</sup>

1. II, 573.

2. Whincop, *Complete List of All the English Dramatic Poets*, p. 199. See also the dramatic list appended to the second volume of the fourth edition of the *Apology*, p. 286.

## 2. OPERAS.

In common with many of his contemporaries, Cibber attempted operatic pieces. His undisputed operas are *Venus and Adonis* (1715), *Myrtillo* (1716), *Love in a Riddle* (1729), and *Damon and Phillida* (1729), the last being merely the sub-plot of *Love in a Riddle* acted separately.<sup>3</sup> Two other operatic pieces, *The Temple of Dullness* (1745) and *Capochio and Dorinna*, have been ascribed to him.

*Love in a Riddle* (1729) seems to have been the cause of some unpleasantness. In the *Life of Quin* (1766) the following account of it is given:<sup>4</sup>

"This uncommon reception of *The Beggar's Opera* induced Colley Cibber to attempt something the same kind the next year, under the title of *Love in a Riddle*, but how different was its reception from Gay's production; it was damned to the lowest regions of infamy the very first night, which so mortified Cibber, that it threw him into a fever; and from this moment he resolved as soon as he conveniently could to leave the stage, and no longer submit himself and his talents to the capricious taste of the town.

"It was generally thought that his jealousy of Gay, and the high opinion he entertained of his own piece had operated so strongly as to make him set every engine in motion to get the sequel of *The Beggar's Opera*, called *Polly*, suppressed in order to engross the town entirely to *Love in a Riddle*. Whether Cibber did or did not bestir himself in this affair, it is certain that Gay and Rich had the mortification to see all their hopes of a succeeding harvest blasted by the Lord Chamberlain's absolute prohibition of it, after it had been rehearsed and was just ready to bring out."

In this same volume<sup>5</sup> it is stated that the failure of the piece was one of the potent causes of the dissolution of the Drury Lane company, though this seems an exaggeration, as does also the effect on Cibber that is ascribed to the failure.

Cibber denies<sup>6</sup> that he had anything to do with the suppression of the second part of *The Beggar's Opera*, and gives as his reason for writing that he thought something written in the same form, but recommending virtue and innocence instead of vice and wickedness, "might not have a less pretence to favor."

3. The sub-plot of *Woman's Wit* was likewise acted separately after the original play had failed on the stage.

4. Reprint of 1887, p. 28.

5. Page 28.

6. *Apology*, I, 180.

*The Temple of Dullness* (1745), which *The Biographia Dramatica*<sup>7</sup> states had been ascribed to Cibber, is in two acts of two scenes each, the second scene of each act being the comic "interlude" of Theobald's *Happy Captive* (1741). These two scenes have as their principal characters, Signor Capochio and Signora Dorinna.<sup>8</sup> The other two scenes, which give the principal title to the piece, are based, as is stated in the preface, on the fact that Pope in *The Dunciad* makes the Goddess of Dullness preside over Italian operas. It is inconceivable that either Cibber or Theobald would have based anything of the sort on a hint from *The Dunciad* and complacently given the credit to Pope, after the way they had both been handled in *The Dunciad*. There is nothing on the title page to indicate that Cibber had anything to do with the piece. The ascription of the authorship of *The Temple of Dullness* to Cibber seems to be without foundation, and the probability is that this piece was composed by a third person soon after Theobald's death, which occurred about four months before it was acted.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning *Capochio and Dorinna*, *The Biographia Dramatica* has the following note: "A piece with this title, but without a date, is, in Mr. Barker's catalogue, ascribed to Colley Cibber. It was probably an abridgment from *The Temple of Dullness*." This statement concerning the source of *Capochio and Dorinna* would seem plausible from the supplementary title of *The Temple of Dullness*,—*With the Humours of Signor Capochio and Signora Dorinna*. *Capochio and Dorinna* is no doubt the two scenes from Theobald's *The Happy Captive* which had been used in *The Temple of Dullness*, as is stated above.

Cibber's operatic writings belong chiefly to the English type of pastoral drama, rather than to the type of Italian opera. In fact, they are not operas either in the Italian or in the modern sense, but are rather plays interspersed with songs appropriate to the characters who sing them. They show the common characteristics of the pastoral drama of the time.<sup>10</sup> They possess the

7. III, 325.

8. The *Advertisement* prefixed to *The Happy Captive* says: "The interlude, which is added in two comic scenes, is entirely new to our climate; and the success of it is submitted to experiment, and the taste of the audience. Only this portion of *The Happy Captive* was ever acted."

9. Theobald died September 18, 1744. *The Temple of Dullness* was acted January 17, 1745.

10. For a history of the pastoral drama in the eighteenth century and a summary of its qualities, see Jeannette Marks, *The English Pastoral Drama*, London, 1908.

court element, have the same plot devices, and their characters belong to the same general types. It is noticeable that Cibber here, as well as in his comedies, arrays himself with the moralists, as is seen in his introduction of a moral purpose in *Love in a Riddle*. These pieces are in verse of varying meters. In *Venus and Adonis* and *Myrtillo* there is apparent imitation of the versification of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*; in *Love in a Riddle* and *Damon and Phillida* the dialogue is in blank verse, but in neither case is the verse inspired.

His operas are neither intrinsically nor historically important; they are merely representative of a vogue which was popular but which left no permanent impress on the English drama.

### 3. TRAGEDIES.

Cibber's seven tragedies appeared in the following order: *Xerxes*, 1699; his adaptation of Shakspeare's *Richard III*, 1700; *Perolla and Izadora*, 1705; the three translations of Corneille, *Ximena*, acted 1712, but not published until 1719, *Cinna's Conspiracy*, 1713, and *Caesar in Egypt*, 1725; and finally *Papal Tyranny*, an adaptation of Shakspeare's *King John*, 1745. The best stage play is *Richard III*, but those that make the most agreeable reading are the alterations of Corneille.

*Xerxes* (1699), which was a failure, belongs to the type of the tragedies of the last decade of the century, in which the material of the heroic play is handled in blank verse, in which there is no comedy, and in which there is in general a following of French models.<sup>11</sup> In its presentation of a story of distressed womanhood, it allies itself with the sentimental tragedy of the school of South-erne and Otway. In its use of the supernatural, in its puerile use of claptrap, and in the bombast and extravagance of emotion, it follows the general usage of the tragedies of the time.

When it was written Cibber was one of the company at Drury Lane, but the play was refused there, and was accepted at Lincoln's Inn Fields only when Cibber guaranteed the expenses of the production. Notwithstanding the fact that two such great actors as Betterton and Mrs. Barry were in the cast, the play was a failure.<sup>12</sup>

The common supposition that it was acted only once, is based

11. Thorndike, *Tragedy*, p. 273.

12. Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 459.



on Addison's inventory of Rich's theatrical paraphernalia, in which are mentioned "the imperial robes of Xerxes, never worn but once."<sup>13</sup> The play had been acted ten years previously, and Addison is speaking of an entirely different playhouse and manager so that this testimony, if it does apply to this play, is probably not to be given much weight. While the play may have been withdrawn from the stage after only one performance, Addison's evidence does not establish the matter one way or the other.

Cibber's next venture in tragedy was more successful, for while his adaptation of Shakspeare's *Richard III* has not received critical commendation, it was for over a century practically the only version presented on the stage and is still used by many actors.

When Cibber's *Richard III* was originally acted at Drury Lane in 1700, Charles Killigrew, Master of the Revels, forbade the first act, because the distress of Henry, introduced from Shakspeare's *Henry VI*, might bring the exiled King James to the mind of the people; so that only four acts could be given. The play was a comparative failure at first, owing no doubt to the omission of so important and necessary a part of the revision, so that Cibber's profits from the third night, as author, came to less than five pounds.<sup>14</sup> Later, when this act was restored, the piece became a success. As has been pointed out by Dohse<sup>15</sup> and Wood<sup>16</sup>, Cibber may in making this adaptation have used the chronicles of Hall and others, and probably was influenced by *The Mirror for Magistrates* and Caryl's *English Princess* (1667).

In his alteration Cibber has cut down the play to a little more than half its original length, and of this remainder only a little over a third is found in Shakspeare's *Richard III*, while the rest is from a number of Shakspeare's plays or is made up of original additions by Cibber.<sup>17</sup> The alterations vary from the change of single words,<sup>18</sup> to the addition of scenes entirely by Cibber. The omissions, such as Anne's spitting at Gloster, I, ii, 146, are gener-

13. *The Tatler*, Number 42, July 16, 1709.

14. *Address to the Reader*, prefixed to *Ximena*.

15. Richard Dohse, *Colley Cibber's Bühnenarbeit von Shakspeare's Richard III*, Bonn, 1899.

16. Alice I. Perry Wood, *The Stage History of Richard III*, New York, 1909.

17. The number and sources of the lines as given by Furness, *Variorum Richard III*, p. 604, are as follows: *Richard II*, 14; *1 Henry IV*, 6; *2 Henry IV*, 20; *Henry V*, 24; *1 Henry VI*, 5; *2 Henry VI*, 17; *3 Henry VI*, 103; *Richard III*, 795; Cibber, 1069; total, 2053. The number of lines in the Globe text of Shakspeare's *Richard III* is 3621.

18. As "God" to "Heaven," I, ii, 236; due in this instance to the Collier influence.



ally happy; the lines he has substituted are generally easier to understand, if less aesthetically pleasing, than those of the original; and the additions throughout are such as add clearness and theatric effectiveness.

Richard is made the central figure, so that the play revolves more closely about him than in Shakspeare. A love story, more slightly developed than usual in the adaptations of this period, is introduced at the end of the play in accordance with contemporary usage. The women are made less prominent, the lyric chorus effect of the various scenes in which these women foretell and bewail is omitted, and the whole action is made more simple and direct. Shakspeare's *Richard III* is full of this lyric element which Cibber has excised.

With this curtailment of plot comes likewise a less highly presented delineation of character. Not only is the number of characters diminished, but modifications are made in those that remain. Richard becomes less the unfeeling hypocrite, by use of asides his motives and character are made more clear, and he is influenced more by love; his victims are not so vividly presented, and though their weakness of will and character is not less than in the original, the reader does not feel it so much. Cibber's *Richard III*, like his *King John*, is more play than poem; in it Cibber has attempted to make everything subservient to dramatic effectiveness.

*Perolla and Izadora* was acted at Drury Lane on December 8, 1705, and published the next year. Lintot had bought the copy-right November 14, 1705, a few weeks before its presentation, for thirty-six pounds, eleven shillings, next to the largest amount that he paid Cibber for any of his plays. Cibber explains that he omitted *Woman's Wit* from the 1721 edition of his plays because it was so inferior a drama, which was no doubt his reason for omitting *Xerxes*; but why he should not have included *Perolla and Izadora*, which brought him a good third and sixth day at the theatre, though it does not appear to have been presented afterwards, is not clear, unless, as is probable, he included in this edition only such plays as had gained a more or less permanent place on the stage.

Cibber shows unusual modesty in his dedication of this play, which he founded on a part of the story of *Perolla and Izadora*

from *The Romance of Parthenissa*<sup>19</sup> (1654) by Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery. He "saw so many incidents in the fable, such natural and noble sentiments in the characters, and so just a distress in the passions, that he had little more than the trouble of blank verse to make it fit for the theatre."<sup>20</sup> Cibber has followed the events in *Parthenissa* very closely, making few changes or additions. However, he has Perolla and Izadora in love before the action begins, whereas they do not meet in the romance until after Perolla has saved the life of Blacius in what makes the end of Cibber's second act; and at the close of the play he unites the lovers, while the story goes on indefinitely in *Parthenissa*. The characters display about the same qualities; Blacius is made perhaps a trifle more reasonable and Poluvius a little less so. The play is much better as a play than the original is as a story.

The play in general conforms to the French classical type; the unities are observed, the characters are few and noble, it is written in blank verse, and there are no humorous touches. Only in the two deaths and the one fight on the stage does the play violate the French tradition. In the death of the wicked, the reward of the virtuous, and the general nature of the action, it groups itself with the heroic plays of the preceding century, but of course it does not conform to that type in versification. Cibber was here probably writing under the influence of Corneille.

*Ximena, or The Heroic Daughter*, an alteration of Corneille's *Cid*, was acted at Drury Lane, November 28, 1712, when it had a run of about eight performances;<sup>21</sup> but it was not printed until 1719, when it appeared in octavo after it had been revived at Drury Lane, November 1, 1718. Cibber explains that he thus delayed publishing the play because "most of his plays had a better reception from the public when his interest was no longer concerned in them."<sup>22</sup> The dedication of *Ximena* brought a storm of criticism on Cibber<sup>23</sup> because in it he spoke of Addison as a wren being carried by Steele as an eagle, which figure he later applied, in his odes, to himself and the king. He had the judgment to omit this dedication from the collected edition of his plays.

As in the case of *Richard III*, he added a first act to the *Cid* in

19. Edition of 1665, pp. 102-157.

20. *Dedication of Perolla and Izadora*.

21. Genest, II, 506.

22. *To the Reader, Ximena*.

23. See Canfield, *Corneille and Racine in England*, p. 169.

order that the audience might understand the situation of the various characters at the outset; a most important and necessary thing if the audience is not familiar with the story and the situation beforehand. In his alterations of Shakspeare he followed the English method and presented this information to his audience by action ;in his alteration of Corneille he followed the French method by having his characters tell each other about it for the benefit of the audience.

Cibber has discussed at length the changes he has made in the *Cid*, and his reasons for them, in the prefatory "examen." The main reason seems to have been his desire to make the play less "romantic" and the action more probable and reasonable from the point of view of the eighteenth century Englishman, whose ideals of honor and whose general characteristics were very different from those of the seventeenth century Frenchman. Indeed, Cibber explains in relation to one of these changes: "Here they seem too declamatory and romantic, which I have endeavored to avoid, by giving a more spirited tone to the passions, and reducing them nearer to common life."

*Ximena*, because of its source, would naturally have the general characteristics of French tragedy, in which almost everything happens off the stage, and in which the characters appear before the audience only to tell it what they think or what has been done. It violates the French canons by having a sub-action, though this sub-action is not sufficiently important to distract the attention materially from the main action, and is bound very closely to it. The blow which Don Gormaz gives Alvarez constitutes the nearest approach to violent action; but this blow, however, appears in the original play.

Besides the anonymity of *Cinna's Conspiracy*, the closeness with which it follows Corneille's *Cinna* and the difference in its tone from the rest of Cibber's work have led to doubt as to his authorship.<sup>24</sup> To see that Cibber was not always sprightly and inconsequential, however, as he is usually supposed to be, one has but to read his *Cicero* and his poems. The play was presented less than three months after *Ximena*, and to bring out another French tragedy translated by the same hand in so short a time might have subjected Cibber to the charge of hasty work. Though

24. Genest, II, 511; and Canfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 179 ff.

*Ximena* apparently had a run of eight nights, it did not receive critical approbation, and *Cinna's Conspiracy*, if known to be by Cibber, was likely to bring further critical disapproval, so that Cibber may have thought it would have better chance of success if his authorship were not known. Cibber was ambitious to be thought wise and serious, as his prefaces and *Cicero* show, and the lack of success of the play together with its nearness to *Ximena* in time of presentation would sufficiently explain his failure to claim the authorship.

But there is external proof which would seem to be convincing in support of his authorship. Defoe, according to the *Biographia Dramatica*,<sup>25</sup> in a pamphlet written about 1713 ascribed the play to Cibber; and Nichols, in *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*,<sup>26</sup> gives an extract from a memorandum book of Lintot, entitled *Copies when purchased*, according to which Cibber, on March 16, 1712 (O. S.), was paid thirteen pounds for *Cinna's Conspiracy*. The play was first acted at Drury Lane, February 19, 1713, about a month before the purchase by Lintot. The fact that Cibber was paid for the play so short a time after its presentation would seem to be sufficient proof that it is by Cibber, even though he apparently made no public claim to its authorship.

In the alteration of Corneille's *Cinna*, Cibber has made remarkably few changes. There is only one of any moment, the account of the meeting of the conspirators in the second scene of the first act. Corneille has had Cinna give an account of this meeting to Emilie, while Cibber presents the meeting itself. This involves the omission of some narration and the creation of some new characters who have a few short speeches. Cibber throughout his adaptation seeks to gain vividness and clearness, and his handling of this incident is probably the best example of his method in

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25. II, 104.

26. VIII, 204.

26.	VIII, 204.	"Mr. Cibber.				
1701	Nov.	8	A Third of Love's Last Shift	3	4	6
1705	Nov.	14	Perolla and Izadora	36	11	0
1707	Oct.	27	Double Gallant	16	2	6
	Nov.	22	Lady's Last Stake	32	5	0
	Feb.	26	Venus and Adonis	5	7	6
1708	Oct.	9	Comical Lover	10	15	0
1712	Mar.	16	Cinna's Conspiracy	13	0	0
1718	Oct.	1	The Nonjuror	105	0	0
			No price or date.			
			Mrytillo, A pastoral,			
			Rival Fools,			
			Heroic Daughter,			
			Wit at Several Weapons."			

this respect. The other changes consist merely in the omission and shortening of speeches. On the whole *Cinna's Conspiracy* is almost a literal translation, though a little free here and there.

The testimony of the critics concerning the source of *Caesar in Egypt*, acted at Drury Lane,<sup>27</sup> December 9, 1724, published in 1725, is somewhat confusing. The *Biographia Dramatica* finds its source in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The False One*; Genest<sup>28</sup> says: "The plan of this tragedy is chiefly borrowed from *The False One*—that part of it which concerns Cornelia is said to be taken from Corneille's *Pompée*." Stoye,<sup>29</sup> while apparently oblivious of Corneille's play, mentions Lucan's *Pharsalia* in addition to *The False One*; and Miss Canfield says:<sup>30</sup> "Taking Beaumont and Fletcher's *False One*, Corneille's *Pompée*, and one or two ideas of his own, he stirred them all together with such vigor, and so disguised them with his wonderful versification, that it is an almost impossible task to distinguish the different elements in the dish. . . . The general plan and construction of the play are undoubtedly Corneille's, many of the best speeches are literally translated, especially some of the famous ones between Cornelia and Caesar; and the description of Pompey's death is taken verbatim from the French." This last statement of Miss Canfield's comes nearest to the truth, but it leaves out of account the slight indebtedness to Lucan.<sup>31</sup>

An examination of these three plays shows, in fact, how little Cibber used *The False One* in the construction of *Caesar in Egypt*. He was no doubt familiar with the Beaumont and Fletcher play and used some things from it, though very little in comparison with what he has used from *Pompée*. He used it for hints in some particulars<sup>32</sup> just as he did the *Pharsalia*, from which he apparently took the idea of having one scene occur before the tomb of Alexander, and from which he obtained the burning of Pharos.

One incident, the display of Pompey's head, well illustrates the change that had come since the days of Beaumont and Fletcher.

27. Although acted six times it could not be considered extremely successful. According to Genest, III, 162, Nichols speaks of having made merry with a party of friends over the pasteboard swans, on the first night of its production.

28. III, 161.

29. *Das Verhaeltniss von Cibber's Tragödie Caesar in Egypt zu Fletcher's The False One*.

30. *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

31. Cibber no doubt used Rowe's translation (1710).

32. Compare, for instance, the general idea of the exposition in Act I.

In *The False One*, the head was actually brought on the stage; but in neither Cibber nor Corneille was the head actually displayed. The actual appearance of the head would probably have been almost as distasteful to Cibber's audience as to Corneille's.

His method of adaptation here is more like that in his alteration of Shakspeare than his method in *Ximena* or *Cinna's Conspiracy*. He has crowded the incidents, has expanded the action and increased its liveliness, has enhanced the value of the piece as a stage play, without, however, improving its literary quality. He has a good deal happen in one day, but manages to satisfy the technical demands of the unity of time.

He increases the probability by the alteration of certain passages. For instance, whereas both the *Pharsalia*, as completed by Rowe,<sup>33</sup> and *The False One*, from one of which he took the incident, have Caesar swimming from the island of Pharos with drawn sword in one hand and documents in the other, Cibber has him swim with only the documents.

While this play is essentially an adaptation of Corneille, the general atmosphere and effect are not those of French tragedy, but are rather those of the minor Elizabethan tragicomedy. Its beginning and end have a historical rather than a dramatic interest, so that the play produces the effect of a love story with an impersonal enveloping action, which is again more English than French.

*Papal Tyranny* was acted at Covent Garden, February 15, 1745, when it had a run of ten nights, and was published in the same year. Shakspeare's *King John*, which had been played in 1737 and 1738, after Cibber's alteration had been talked of and withdrawn, was again revived on February 20, 1745,<sup>34</sup> with Garrick as King John and Mrs. Theophilus Cibber, then at the height of her popularity, as Constance. This was no doubt done both to profit by the publicity Cibber's work had brought about, and to take as much credit as possible from Cibber, by showing the lack of originality in his work.<sup>35</sup> According to Victor,<sup>36</sup> Cibber's profits from *Papal Tyranny* amounted to

33. Lucan ends before this incident, but Rowe continues the narrative, using the same material as *The False One*.

34. Genest, IV, 146, says that it had not been acted since 1695, though he records the performances in 1737 and 1738.

35. It is to be noted that efforts were made to deprive Cibber of credit for his work not only in this play but also in *The Non-Juror* and *The Refusal*.

36. *The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin*, II, 49.



four hundred pounds, which probably includes what he received from acting Pandulph as well as his author's profits.

The play had been written some years before it was finally acted, the parts had been distributed, and everything was practically ready for the presentation in public during the season 1736-7. But so much criticism was leveled at Cibber for daring again to alter Shakspeare that one day he quietly walked into the theatre, removed the copy of the play from the prompter's desk, and went away with it without a word to any one.<sup>37</sup> It was finally presented, as already stated, in 1745, when there was a threatened invasion by the Young Pretender, which made the political and anti-Catholic elements of the play timely.

Cibber says in the dedication that he had two reasons for altering the play: antagonism to Catholicism, and a desire to adjust the play to contemporary stage requirements—"to make it more like a play than he found it in Shakspeare." His additions to the anti-Catholic elements of the play are inconsistent with the rest of the action, and the changes in structure have increased rather than diminished the epic quality. He has, without being conscious that he was doing so, gone back of Shakspeare's time in introducing the anti-popish element; a quality of Shakspeare's source which Shakspeare had omitted, but which Cibber reintroduced to the detriment of his play as drama.

The entire first act of Shakspeare's play is omitted, besides which there are other shorter omissions. The point of view, too, is very different; for in Cibber's play Pandulph is the central figure, instead of King John, as is indicated by the change of title from *The Life and Death of King John* to *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*. Various short scenes entirely by Cibber are introduced, the most noticeable being one in the last act in which Constance attends the funeral of Arthur at Swinestead, where King John has been brought to die.

The characters are more changed than the plot; all those which appear only in the first act are omitted, besides such characters as Peter of Pomfret, Elinor, Austria, and Chatillon. The part of the bastard Faulconbridge is very much cut down and softened, for as Shakspeare conceived him he was too "low" and comic for a dignified tragedy according to the views of the eighteenth

37. Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, I, 5. For a characteristic example of the criticism to which Cibber was subjected, see Fielding's *Historical Register for the Year 1736*, Act III.

century. The rôle of Constance is much enlarged as well as that of Pandulph.

Cibber's tragedies are imitative; he showed no creative ability in this field. That his *Richard III* has held the stage until the present is an indication that it is at least a good stage play. The other tragedies, except *Xerxes* and *Papal Tyranny*, do not possess any very positive virtues or defects; they are of average merit as compared with the work done by Cibber's contemporaries.

They are alterations of Shakspeare or Corneille, except *Xerxes* and *Perolla and Izadora*. In his alterations of the French he has anglicized some of the ideas, has had a tendency to present rather than relate incidents, and generally has tried to make the productions conform to English ideas. Turning them into English has not made them romantic or altered in any essential degree their neo-classical quality.

His alterations of Shakspeare have not changed the essential qualities; they are still characteristically English, and display the characteristics of the originals. He has not altered Shakspeare because Shakspeare is too "Gothic," or too romantic and extravagant, for Cibber complains that *King John* is too restrained.

In relation to these alterations of Shakspeare one naturally thinks of the flood of plays about this time which had Shakspeare as a basis.<sup>38</sup> Cibber does not, in *Richard III* at least, follow the example of Tate and his kind, but adheres more closely than they to the originals. It is for this reason, principally, that Cibber's *Richard III* was successful. In this he has not attempted to follow contemporary practice in adhering to the unities, in the observance of poetic justice, in the making of the hero virtuous, or in adding the element of show and pageantry. His addition of a scene of violence<sup>39</sup> is for the purpose of helping the spectator to understand the play. Even his borrowing of lines from other plays by Shakspeare has saved him partially from the incongruous or weak mixture of two styles which mars the work of other adapters. He has told the same story as Shakspeare, and has not done violence to his original either in character, plot, or, for the most part, in language.

38. For full discussion of the relationship between Cibber's *Richard III* and Shakspeare's *Richard III*, see A. I. P. Wood, and Dohse. The whole subject of Shaksperian alterations is taken up in Lounsbury's *Shakspeare as a Dramatic Artist*, and in Kilbourne's *Alterations and Adaptations of Shakspeare*. It is curious that Lounsbury does not discuss Cibber's *Richard III*, which is not only the most famous Shaksperian alteration but the only one of any real value.

39. The addition of parts from 3 *Henry VI* at the beginning of the play.



His adaptation of *King John* is handled differently. This play, even more than Shakspeare's *King John*, is unfitted for the modern stage; its plot is not dramatic, and its persons are not modern in their qualities. Such a play must depend for its appeal on its poetic qualities, and Cibber was personally incapable of altering the play and retaining its poetic qualities.

Although Cibber is not unaffected by the sentimental type of tragedy, as *Xerxes* and *Perolla and Izadora* show, he does not seem influenced by it to any great extent. This is remarkable in one who was in the very forefront of the movement toward sentimental comedy; though it is to be remarked that the two tragedies which do show traces of this sentimental note are the only two which are not based on previous plays.

As Thorndike<sup>40</sup> has pointed out, during this period two influences are at work—the influence of the Elizabethan romantic drama, and the influence of the French classical drama; and Cibber rather fairly represents both of these. *Xerxes* shows some French influence in the construction, though it is probably more Elizabethan in the handling of the material; but *Perolla and Izadora* and the three plays from Corneille conform to French usage almost entirely in material as well as in method. The restraint in *Richard III*—for notwithstanding Hazlitt, this play is not as brutal as Shakspeare's—is due to the change brought about through the imitation of French tragedy.

In accordance with contemporary usage, all these tragedies are in blank verse; but the verse is of no great merit. Cibber's verse for the most part is not musical nor subtle, but it has few mannerisms. He sometimes uses alliteration, but not to an objectionable or excessive degree, and although his style has been called alliterative, his use of this device in his verse is so infrequent as to make the term a misnomer.

Cibber conforms to the custom of the time in respect to rime. Occasionally he introduces a couplet in the midst of a scene, but this is seldom and for no apparent reason. The exits, except those of minor importance, are marked by rime. This device, descended from the Elizabethan drama, where it was probably used to mark more strongly the ends of scenes because of the lack of a curtain which concealed the whole stage, is continued during and after the Restoration period without any valid reason

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40. *Tragedy*, VIII and IX.

and becomes for the most part a mere convention, which is not confined to tragedy but appears in comedy and even in farce. Cibber shows a tendency to increase the number of couplets with the increased importance of the exits,<sup>41</sup> and in *Ximena* and *Caesar in Egypt* we find several scenes closing with as many as three.

It has perhaps been made sufficiently evident that Cibber was not a great writer of tragedy. He lacked any deep philosophy of life, tragic consciousness, and deep poetic feeling. He was not without power of thought, but his thought concerned itself with the obvious and the external, and had an element of friskiness, so that when he turned to tragedy his work became labored and even commonplace.

Nor does he show originality in his themes. The story of *Xerxes* is apparently derived from history,<sup>42</sup> and aside from *Perolla and Izadora*, whose story is taken from a romance, is the only one of his tragedies which is not based on the work of greater men than himself. Although *Richard III* is a better stage play than its source, the other adaptations are inferior to the originals both as acting versions and as pure literature.

#### 4. COMEDIES.

*Love's Last Shift*, Cibber's first play, was acted at Drury Lane in January, 1696, and was published the same year, when he was a little more than twenty-four years old. The comedy was accepted by the managers through the good offices of Southerne, for Cibber's standing with the patentees was such that they were not disposed to recognize ability in him.

So little had been expected of the piece, and so great was its success, that Cibber was immediately charged with plagiarism,<sup>43</sup> a charge which he entirely denies in the dedication. He claims

41. See especially throughout *Ximena*.

42. According to *The Life of Acsopus*, this "was said to be a silly tale collected from some dreaming romance," but as the writer does not give the title of this romance and apparently had no knowledge of the play, his testimony is of no value.

43. "The furious John Dennis, who hated Cibber for obstructing, as he imagined, the progress of his tragedy, called *The Invader of His Country*, in very passionate terms denies his claim to this comedy: 'When *The Fool in Fashion* was first acted,' says the critic, 'Cibber was hardly twenty-two years of age; how could he, at the age of twenty, write a comedy with a just design, distinguished characters, and a proper dialogue who now, at forty, treats us with Hibernian sense and Hibernian English?'" Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 410.

that "the fable is entirely his own, nor is there a line or thought throughout the whole, for which he is wittingly obliged either to the dead or the living." There are, however, some striking similarities in the situations and the characters in the sub-action of *Love's Last Shift* and Carlile's *Fortune Hunters* (1689). Carlile's Elder Wealthy and Young Wealthy are closely paralleled by Elder Worthy and Young Worthy, as are likewise the young women with whom they are in love, and Carlile's Shamtown belongs to the same family as Sir Novelty Fashion, though he is much more crudely portrayed. So too, the jealousy of Elder Worthy in regard to Hillaria and Sir Novelty is very much like that of Elder Wealthy in regard to Sophia and Shamtown. So great is the similarity that, notwithstanding his denial, one must believe that Cibber deliberately used the situation and characters as a basis for his own, though he did not copy the language, and has made an entirely new and original thing out of his source.

So great was the failure of his second play that Cibber refuses to mention it in his *Apology* and omitted it from the collected edition of his plays in 1721. *Woman's Wit, or The Lady in Fashion* was acted at Drury Lane in 1697, but met with a most unfavorable reception, though in management of the plot it is not inferior to a great many plays whose success was much greater.

Carlile's *Fortune Hunters* (1689) and Mountford's *Greenwich Park* (1691) have been suggested as the sources of that part of the plot in which Young Rakish and Major Rakish appear, but this is only partially true. In *The Fortune Hunters* the father and son are rivals for a young woman, in *Woman's Wit* she is an elderly widow; in both, the son has obtained five hundred pounds from the father. But notwithstanding the fact that these situations are superficially similar the characters and the details of the action are so different that it does not seem possible that there can be any connection between the two plays. There does seem to be a more valid reason for affirming the influence of *Greenwich Park* in the play. The likeness of Sir Thomas Reveller and Young Reveller to Old Rakish and Young Rakish is so great that Cibber must have had them in mind, but the differences both of character and action are such that it seems probable that he was attempting to portray two characters of the same type rather than trying to copy them. In *Greenwich Park* there is not even a superficial

similarity of situation to *Woman's Wit*.<sup>44</sup> The sub-action of *Woman's Wit* was separated and acted successfully at Drury Lane in 1707 as *The School Boy*.

*Love Makes a Man* was acted at Drury Lane in 1701, and was published the same year. It continued to be played until 1828. It is made from Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Elder Brother* and *The Custom of the Country*, and is an attempt on the part of Cibber merely to provide amusement. Ost<sup>45</sup> points out that this play, though it has no original literary worth, helped continue the literary tradition, and notices it in connection with the healthful influence of Cibber's work in the moralizing tendency of the drama. He adds that Cibber's plays have more value in relation to "kulturgeschichte" than in aesthetic interest. That is entirely true so far as this play is concerned; various parts have a purely contemporary interest, or are an indication to us of the state of dramatic taste, and the aesthetic value is certainly often inconsiderable. When Cibber introduces such references as "hatchet face" of Clodio, a term which had been applied to Cibber himself, who played the part, and more particularly in the farcical discussion of the two playhouses in the fourth act, he is not even attempting to write anything but horseplay.

By the omission and transposition of scenes, and the introduction of some lines of his own, mainly for the purpose of gaining probability, as Ost has pointed out, Cibber has condensed *The Elder Brother* so that it forms practically the first two acts, and *The Custom of the Country* so that it forms the last three. In the main, the plays, so much of them as is used, are followed with very few changes, and the whole makes a sprightly and amusing, if not particularly literary comedy.

The change of place and the introduction of an entirely new set of characters with fresh plot developments are dramatically faulty; but for the purpose for which the play was written these faults are not particularly great. To join the plots of two separate plays end on end without breaking the continuity of the story, and to adjust the characters so that there is no glaring inconsistency, is surely no slight feat.

44. Jacob, *Poetical Register*, p. 38, suggests Otway's *Dare Devil* (that is, *The Atheist*) as the source of the play, but it would take a vivid imagination to see the connection.

45. *Das Verhaeltniss von Cibber's Lustspiel Love Makes a Man zu Fletcher's Dramen The Elder Brother und The Custom of The Country*, p. 82.

In the characterization Cibber has made some changes. These changes appear particularly in Eustace, who becomes Clodio, Miramont, who becomes Don Lewis, and Elvira, who is the sister instead of the mother of Don Duarte. It is difficult to understand how this play could have been other than a theatrical success with Bullock to interpret the farcical obstinacy of Antonio, Penkethman to portray the humorously choleric Don Lewis, and Cibber as the "pert coxcomb," Clodio. But it is farce rather than pure comedy.

Cibber has changed these plays from verse to prose, except in the first scene between Carlos and Angelina, in which the romantic seriousness of the situation leads him to write blank verse, which is however printed as prose.

*She Would and She Would Not*, considered by Genest as "perhaps his best play," was acted at Drury Lane, November 26, 1702, and continued to be acted frequently as late as 1825.<sup>46</sup> The striking similarity of the two plays has caused the suggestion that Cibber's play is based on Leander's *The Counterfeits* (1678). The similarity indicates a common source, rather than that Cibber drew from *The Counterfeits*. The source of Cibber's play was no doubt *The Trepanner Trepanned*, which is the third story of John Davies's *La Picara, or The Triumphs of Female Subtilty*, published in London in 1665.<sup>47</sup>

This play is amusing, is well constructed, and while it is not of serious import, is such as might be presented today with success.

Cibber commenced to write *The Careless Husband* in the summer of 1703, but laid it aside because he despaired of finding any one to take the part of Lady Betty Modish. In 1704 he again took up the writing of the play, and in that year it was acted at Drury Lane on December 7; and it was published in 1705. It was one of the best and most successful plays of the period.<sup>48</sup> It was charged that Cibber received direct assistance in writing the

46. It was acted in New York, January 15, 1883, by Miss Ada Rehan, under the management of Augustin Daly. See Lowe, *Apology*, II, 289. Genest records, VI, 23, that when it was performed at Covent Garden in 1778, "the applause was so strong in the second act, that the performers were obliged to stop for some time."

47. This translation of three French novels, whose original source had been Spanish, was issued again in 1712 as *Three Ingenious Spanish Novels*. See Chandler, *Romances of Roquerry*, New York, 1899, pp. 462-3. These novels are ultimately based on *La Garduna de Sevilla* of Castillo Solorzano. It is also to be noticed that the story appears in *La Villana de Ballecas* by Tirso de Molina, in *La Ocasión hace al ladrón*, by Moreto, and in the story of Aurora in Le Sage's *Gil Blas*. Dunlop, *History of Prose Fiction*, II, 475, states that *She Would and She Would Not* is taken from *Gil Blas*. *Gil Blas* was published thirteen years later than Cibber's play.

48. Wilkes, *General View of the Stage*, p. 40, says that were the play curtailed of one scene he "would not fail to pronounce it not only the best comedy in English, but in any other language."

play, but he denied the charge, and as no proof was offered, Cibber is no doubt to be believed. It seems to have no literary source; but one incident, that in which the wife finds the husband and her maid asleep in easy chairs, is said to have been suggested to Cibber by Mrs. Brett, the reputed mother of the poet Savage, from her own experience.<sup>49</sup>

This is Cibber's best play of the sentimental type. Its plot is consistent, has dramatic probability, and is serious enough in interest to have real reason for being. The characters are well conceived and well portrayed. In style, too, Cibber is here at his best and the dialogue approaches the finest of the period.

The Haymarket opened the season 1706-7 under Swiney, and in order to encourage the new venture, Lord Halifax headed a subscription for the revival of three plays: Shakspeare's *Julius Caesar*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *King and No King*, and the comic scenes of Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* and *A Maiden Queen*. The last took the form of an adaptation called *The Comical Lovers*, the adaptation being the work of Cibber. It was acted February 4, 1707, and was published the same year. The alteration was the result of only six days' labor,<sup>50</sup> and Cibber claims no originality in it. It met with slight success.

*The Comical Lovers* is another such adaptation as *Love Makes a Man*. Cibber has merely taken the two comic threads from their serious settings and interwoven them, first a scene from one and then a scene from the other, with only the changes necessary to join them, and has followed his sources almost word for word. Cibber was not under the necessity of changing verse into prose, as he had done in *Love Makes a Man*, for the comic sections of Dryden are in prose, according to the changed convention of his time; and in the scene between Melantha and her maid, Cibber has not even taken the trouble to alter a single one of the French words, many of which must have acquired a place in the language and been in good use by Cibber's time. So far as Cibber's part is concerned, this is the least important of his plays.

*The Double Gallant* was acted at the Haymarket, November 1, 1707, but was apparently not successful at its first performance. *The Biographia Dramatica*<sup>51</sup> says:

"In a letter from Booth to A. Hill we learn that the play, at its

49. Boswell's *Johnson*, edited by G. Birkbeck Hill, London, 1891; I, 201.

50. Preface to *The Double Gallant*.

51. II, 173.



first appearance was, as he expressed it, hounded in a most outrageous manner. Two years after, it was revived, met with most extravagant success, and has continued a stock play ever since."

Cibber says nothing about any hounding of the play, but ascribes the failure of the piece to the fact that the Haymarket was too big for plays; a fact that he thinks caused the lack of success of other plays as well as his own.

In regard to the authorship, Cibber says:<sup>52</sup>

"It was made up of what was tolerable, in two, or three others, that had no Success, and were laid aside, as so much Poetical Lumber; but by collecting and adapting the best Parts of them all, into one Play, the *Double Gallant* has had a Place, every Winter, amongst the Publick Entertainments, these Thirty Years. As I was only the Compiler of this Piece, I did not publish it in my own Name."

The title would lead one to suppose that it is taken directly from Corneille's *Le Galant Double*, but it is a weaving together of Mrs. Centlivre's *Love at a Venture*, which is an adaptation of Corneille, Burnaby's *Ladies Visiting Day*, and the Lady Dainty action from Burnaby's *Reformed Wife*. In consolidating such parts of these three plays as are used, the crudities of the first two are polished off, and certain additions are made to the last. These additions consist in sections of the dialogue, in the changing of Lady Dainty's lover into a more impetuous wooer, and in the addition of the lover's disguise as a Russian, by which subterfuge he wins her. The introductory scene, taken from *Love at a Venture*, is much more lively and entertaining in Cibber's play than in the original, and Cibber likewise handles more adroitly the subterfuge of the hero's arrest, taken from the same play, using the same device of decoy letters that he uses in *Woman's Wit*. In the working over of Burnaby's adaptation of the Horner episode, which he had taken from Wycherley's *Country Wife*, Cibber has entirely eliminated the unpleasant features.

This play is the same sort of an adaptation as his working over of other earlier plays. He has taken such scenes as he wished, changed the names of the characters, and introduced sufficient lines of his own to give continuity and connection to the various actions, but has made no material additions whatever. In this

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52. *Apology*, I, 243.

case he has made an extremely diverting play, very superior to his originals.

*The Lady's Last Stake*, which seems to be entirely original, was produced at the Haymarket, December 13, 1707, when it was acted five times; and it was published probably early in the next year. It continued on the London stage until 1786, and was last performed at Bath, in 1813. It is only a fair comedy, lacking the qualities of style, the originality in the conception of the characters, and the skilful working out of the plot that had characterized Cibber's two earlier plays of the sentimental type. But in whatever way the plot as a whole may be lacking, the last act has plenty of liveliness; there complication follows complication and humorous incidents follow serious with great rapidity.

*The Rival Fools*, published in quarto in 1709 and played at Drury Lane, January 11, 1709, is an alteration of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit at Several Weapons*, and was not successful. At its first presentation it was acted five times, and was revived only once, in 1712, when it was acted twice. *The Biographia Dramatica*<sup>53</sup> relates the following incident of the first performance, the events of which may be compared with the reception accorded Thomson's *Sophonisba*:

"It met, however, with bad success. There happened to be a circumstance in it, which, being in itself rather ridiculous, gave a part of the audience an opportunity of venting their spleen on the author; viz: a man in one of the earlier scenes on the stage, with a long angling rod in his hand, going to fish for Miller's Thumbs; on which account some of the spectators took occasion whenever Mr. Cibber appeared, who himself played the character, to cry out continually, 'Miller's Thumbs.'"

Cibber has followed the original quite closely so far as the plot is concerned, much more closely than would be inferred from the first lines of the prologue:

"From sprightly Fletcher's loose confed'rat muse,  
Th' unfinish'd Hints of these light Scenes we chuse,  
For with such careless haste his Play was writ,  
So unpursued each thought of started Wit;  
Each Weapon of his Wit so lamely fought  
That 'twou'd as scanty on our Stage be thought,  
As for a modern Belle my Grannum's Petticoat.  
So that from th' old we may with Justice say,  
We scarce could cull the Trimming of a play."

53. III, 209. See also Thomes Whincop's *Scanderbeg*, (1747), p. 195. An account of the lives and writings of the English dramatists is annexed to this play.



In spite of this statement by Cibber himself, he adds practically nothing to the plot, and in the dialogue adds merely a touch here and there.

As was customary in altering these old comedies written in verse, the verse of the original is changed into prose, and as is also customary in all of Cibber's alterations, the long speeches are broken into dialogue.

The character of Pompey Doodle is somewhat enlarged in its transformation into Samuel Simple, and is one of the most amusing elements in the play. The treatment is distinctly Jacobean in its exaggeration of character, and the reception by the audience must be attributed either to the alteration of taste on the part of the public, or to the personal unpopularity of Cibber, for the rôle is well written and Cibber was particularly well fitted to act the part, both by temperament and by physical qualities.

*The Non-Juror* was acted at Drury Lane on December 6, 1717, with a prologue by Nicholas Rowe, poet laureate, and was published in 1718. At the time of its first presentation it had the comparatively long run of twenty-three performances, and was revived at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in 1745, when its political meaning was again pertinent.

The play came at a time of great political stress, so that it was but natural that its strong Whig and anti-Catholic sentiments should arouse the greatest antagonism.<sup>54</sup> This antagonism was not only voiced in the many pamphlets issued at the time, but no doubt affected the general attitude toward Cibber in his later life. Cibber, in his first letter to Pope, states that one of his enemies went so far as to write a pamphlet whose purport was that *The Non-Juror* constituted a subtle Jacobite libel against the government. He dedicated the play to the king when it was published, and for this he received a gift of two hundred pounds. Cibber was not burdened in mind because he had offended the losing party, and any inconvenience he may have felt was amply repaid by the pension and laureateship which later came as his reward.

*The Non-Juror* is based directly on Molière's *Tartuffe*, though two plays on the same theme had previously appeared in English: Crowne's *English Friar* (1689), and Medbourne's *Tartuffe*

54. Following the Scottish rebellion in 1715, Lord Derwentwater and Lord Kenmore were executed, February 24, 1716. The king's pardon, which excepted forty-seven classes of offenders, appears in *The Historical Register* for 1717, II, 247; so that the excitement caused by the rebellion continued for some time. Doran's *London in Jacobite Times* discusses this period in a most interesting manner.

(1670), the latter a direct adaptation of Molière's play. This *Tartuffe* was revived during the summer season of 1718 at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was published while Cibber's play was still running, with an advertisement that in it "may be seen the plot, characters, and most part of the language of *The Non-Juror*." This statement is true only in that the two plays by Medbourne and Cibber are based on Molière, and was made to discredit Cibber's claim to originality in the adaptation.

Cibber was no doubt familiar with Medbourne's play, but he used Molière as a basis, and owed practically nothing to any play other than the *Tartuffe* of Molière. Cibber may have derived the suggestion of the reformation of Charles from the corresponding character in Medbourne's play, but his manner of carrying out this reformation and the difference in the qualities of the characters in the two plays make this part an original creation.

In the edition of Crowne in the series of *The Dramatists of the Restoration*, the editors maintain Cibber's greater indebtedness to Crowne than to Molière, in a way that makes one doubt whether they had ever read either Molière or Cibber. So far as plot is concerned there is absolutely no resemblance, except that in both a priest attempts to seduce a decent woman. The characters, style, and management are both different and inferior in Crowne, although some slight similarity may be discovered in the attempt of Finical and Dr. Wolf to allay the consciences of the respective objects of their attentions. As suggested by Van Laun, Father Finical, like Dr. Wolf, is based on *Tartuffe*.

Cibber has handled his sources very freely, and in some particulars has improved both the plot and the characters. That is not to say that *The Non-Juror* is a greater play than Molière's *Tartuffe*, for as a whole it is not. The parts of Dorine, who in *Tartuffe* is the life and source of the humor, of Cléante, and of Madame Pernelle, are omitted, but the part of Mariane is enlivened into one of the best coquettes of the stage. The other characters and incidents correspond in *The Non-Juror* and Molière's *Tartuffe*, though the dénouement is more artistically handled in Cibber.

*The Refusal*, an adaptation of Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes*, published in 1721, was acted at Drury Lane, February 14, 1721, and had a run of six performances. Molière's play had been ad-

apted by Wright as *The Female Virtuoso*es in 1693, and this play was revived at Lincoln's Inn Fields on January 10, 1721, to anticipate *The Refusal*. In like manner with the effort to discredit Cibber's hand in *The Non-Juror*, though in this case after the run of Cibber's play was over, Curll published, with a dedication to Cibber, "the second edition of *No Fools Like Wits*,<sup>55</sup> as it was acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields or *The Refusal*, as it was acted at Drury Lane."

In his adaptation Cibber has made more changes than is usual with him, both in plot and in character; and in the dialogue he has anglicized the idiom to an extent not found in his adaptations of tragedies from the French.

Molière's comedy is a satire on false learning in men as well as in women, while Cibber has added some satire on business trickery, in the same way that he added political satire in his adaptation of *Tartuffe*. Cibber has supplied the elder daughter with a successful suitor, and the dénouement is brought about by different, more complicated, and more characteristically English means. In the incident in Molière's play in which Bélise takes the love of Clitandre to herself, Cibber substitutes the mother for Bélise, omits the maid, along with her impertinences, and adds some slight original incidents.

Trissotin, the poet, becomes one of the typical would-be wits of English comedy, and Chrysale is changed to a typical promoter. In Molière, Chrysale is a purely humorous character, whose vacillation and lack of force were no doubt very laughable on the stage; Sir Gilbert, his equivalent in Cibber's play, on the other hand, is in no way a weakling and is in no way admirable or a source of laughter, but embodies a satire on contemporary business practices.

The directness and simplicity of Molière's play, the unity of tone and plot, give way in Cibber to complication of plot and character, in which the whole piece loses the delightful quality of the humor of the original.

*The Provoked Husband* was presented at Drury Lane, January 10, 1728, and had a run of twenty-eight nights. There was an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Cibber's enemies to damn the play on the first night; the interruptions were so great that during the fourth act the actors were compelled to stand still until it was

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55. The second title of *The Female Virtuoso*es.

quiet enough for them to be heard. On January 31, Cibber published Vanbrugh's unfinished play and his own completion of it. The critics, who had condemned the play unmercifully, especially the supposed additions of Cibber, found, when the plays were published, that it was not Cibber but Vanbrugh they had been condemning. According to Cibber,<sup>56</sup> on the twenty-eighth night the play took in one hundred and forty pounds, a greater amount than had been taken in at the last night of any play for fifty years.

Vanbrugh's *Journey to London* consists of four acts, the first two practically complete, but the last two apparently unfinished. Cibber has used practically all that Vanbrugh left, omitting the trip to the theatre in the last part of Act II, and adding much of his own to the whole play. He has interspersed his additions between the parts of Vanbrugh's play, and has changed very little of the Vanbrugh part, except to "water it down" where it had been too strong for the changed taste of the theatre goers.

Cibber's additions to Steele's *Conscious Lovers* are mentioned on a later page of these *Studies*.

Several of Cibber's comedies were translated into foreign tongues: in German *The Double Gallant* appeared as *Der doppelte Liebhaber*, translated by Johann Friedrich Jünger and published in Leipzig in 1786, *The Careless Husband* as *Der sorglose Ehemann*, published in Göttingen in 1750, and *The Provoked Husband* as *Der erzürnte Ehemann und der Landjunker*, published in Frankfurt in 1753; in French *The Provoked Husband* appeared as *Le Mari poussé à bout, ou le voyage à Londres*, published in London, 1761.

The adaptations, except *The Non-Juror* and *The Refusal*, seem to have been produced merely to furnish amusement which should be in accordance with changed stage conditions and changed taste. They show little originality, being merely the stringing together of scenes without alteration, though Cibber in the prologue to *The Double Gallant* says:

"Nay, even alter'd Plays, like old houses mended,  
Cost little less than new, before they're ended;  
At least, our author finds the experience true."

His method seems to have been to take two plays of an older author, often plays which contained both a serious and a comic

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<sup>56.</sup> *Apology*, II, 58.

action, to select such scenes as suited his purpose, and to join them into a play, either alternating the scenes of the separate plays with link characters, or putting the two plays end on end, as in the case of *Love Makes a Man*. This latter method entailed much greater labor, as many of the characters were made by consolidating two characters from different plays.

Cibber's comedies, which constitute his best and most important work, may be divided into two general classes: comedies of manners and intrigue, and sentimental comedies. The first class includes two adaptations from Beaumont and Fletcher which are not strictly comedies of manners but are more closely allied to the "comedy of humours," namely, *Love Makes a Man* and *The Rival Fools*; one adaptation made out of two plays by Dryden, *The Comical Lovers*; two from Molière, *The Non-Juror* and *The Refusal*, into both of which he introduced contemporary social and political interest; and three other plays, *Woman's Wit*, *She Would and She Would Not*, and *The Double Gallant*, the last of which takes its title, if not its plot, from Corneille's *Le Galant Double*. The sentimental comedies, in which form Cibber was one of the very first to write, are *Love's Last Shift*, *The Careless Husband*, *The Lady's Last Stake*, and *The Provoked Husband*, the last being a completion of Vanbrugh's *Journey to London*. The first class consists almost altogether of adaptations; the second class is essentially original.



## II

### CIBBER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

#### 1. CIBBER, NOT STEELE, THE IMPORTANT FIGURE IN ITS EARLY DEVELOPMENT.

The fully developed form of sentimental comedy may be said to begin with Steele's *Conscious Lovers* (1722) and to end with the attack upon it made by Goldsmith, Foote, and their followers. Goldsmith was "strongly prepossessed in favour of the poets of the last age and strove to imitate them,"<sup>57</sup> and by his reintroduction of humor into comedy he exerted a strong influence toward the downfall of the sentimental type. The end of this vogue is generally well understood, but the beginning of it has not been investigated with the same thoroughness. Steele is generally given the credit of being the innovator who reformed the stage,<sup>58</sup> although Ward and others give some credit to the work of Cibber. The importance of Cibber in the development of this form and in the moral reformation of comedy, the effect of social conditions, and the gradual change from the Restoration type, have not been fully studied. Colley Cibber was the most important writer of comedy in preparing the way for the new form, and practically every element of the later sentimental comedy is found in his work. But Cibber was not a reformer calling on his age to repent; he was rather answering a general demand of his time.

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57. *Preface to The Good Natured Man.*

58. See, for example, *Steele and The Sentimental Comedy*, by M. E. Hare, in *Eighteenth Century Literature, An Oxford Miscellany*, Oxford, 1909. This speaks of "Sentimental Comedy invented by the great essayist Sir Richard Steele."



Three stages may be discerned in the development of sentimental comedy: first, that in which the morals of comedy were purified and the new sentimental material was intermixed with the old humorous material, represented by the work of Cibber; second, that in which the sentimental theme is presented with very little comic entertainment, represented by *The Conscious Lovers*; and third, that in which the comedy of this second stage degenerates and in which the work becomes artificial and lifeless, represented by the plays of Holcroft and his school.

Sentimental comedy as seen in its second phase may be briefly described as comedy of manners in which the main action tends to inculcate a moral lesson, in which the incidents no longer deal with illicit intrigues, and in which the action is complicated by distressingly pathetic situations. The chief characters are generally serious and supersensitive in regard to such matters as filial duty, honor, and the like; and while these persons are in no need of being reformed, their exaggerated conceptions of honor have caused them to act so that they are placed in an equivocal position and they appear to the other characters as vicious. The language is chaste, there is constant introduction of extremely stilted moralizing, and there is a notable absence of humor.

Cibber's work in other lines was conventional and commonplace. It is true that his *Apology* is lively and interesting, and his pamphlets in reply to Pope's attacks are keen and humorous though vulgar, but the rest of his prose is extremely conventional. His poetry, except a few songs, is inexpressibly poor. Aside from one opera in which he takes the same stand in regard to virtue that he does in his comedies, his operas are merely the commonplace following of a vogue. His tragedies are generally imitative; with two exceptions they are adaptations of Corneille or Shakspeare. His farces are about equal in merit to his poetry, and are devoid of originality.

Nor does Cibber's life indicate the qualities that appear in his sentimental comedies. The moral standard he displays in his pamphlets in reply to Pope is far from high, and from the testimony of his contemporaries concerning his personal character it would seem that he was far from being the sort of man who would set about reforming anything. And in all probability he would not have done so if there had not been a general public movement in that direction.



## 2. SENTIMENTAL COMEDY A PRODUCT OF VARIOUS FORCES.

But sentimental comedy did not spring full grown from the brain of a single man. Nor was it the result of a single revolutionary force. Sentimental comedy resulted from gradual modifications of the drama of the time, developing from the prevalent type little by little until it finally appeared as an independent form. The reform of the stage was not an isolated phenomenon, nor was it directly the result of the attacks made by Collier and others. Rather are all these the result of a changed public conscience, which was manifested not merely in literature and on the stage, but in the Revolution of 1688 and a subsequent social reformation as well.

Immediately after the Restoration there may be discovered two elements in the life of the nation which had an influence both on the form and on the content of literature. On the one side was the court, whose standards affected both the form and content in the direction of foreign models. Through the long period of exile on the continent, Charles and his followers had become foreign in their literary taste and they had great influence in the direction of a French type as regards form; and because of the low and vicious standards of living prevalent at court their influence stimulated the sympathetic handling of low and vicious subjects.

On the other hand, there were the people, strictly native in their preference, who influenced the drama in the direction of native standards in form, and Puritan standards in content. As to the form of comedy, there was nothing essentially antagonistic in these two influences; the one could easily combine with the other so that a new thing, congruous and consistent, might result; but in the material presented antagonism was bound to arise and soon did arise. In the development of sentimental comedy from the type which predominated during and after the Restoration, there was not at first any modification in structural elements; the comedy of manners was adopted, so far as form was concerned; the change, which was gradual and was a direct response to changed social and moral conditions, was at first entirely in the matter of content. This change first appears in the sincere reformation of the hero at the end of the play; then in the attitude towards cuckoldom, which Restoration comedy had treated as a humorous fact; and then in the character of the language, which was altered in the direction of moral decency.

Under Charles II and James II the court, on which the theatre depended for its right to live and also for its patronage, was vicious and depraved. Its one grace was wit, and that it had in a superlative degree.

### 3. PROGRESS IN ENGLISH SOCIETY.

The people in general, except the court and those more or less fashionable classes of society which would naturally follow it, were not affected by this mode. They learned to despise Charles II personally because of his lack of honor and morals, and hated his followers as well as their mode of life. In the city the Puritan element, which was "at once the most substantial and sober" part of the community, began to exercise some of the same control of manners and morals that it had practised under the commonwealth, and checked the constant disregard of its moral principles by the court.

But even during this corrupt time there were manifestations of activity on the part of other elements of society, which looked toward the betterment of conditions. In the life of the state there were events which made for general progress and a more moral life among all the people. With special reference to the regulation and restraint of the theatre, certain elements in Parliament attempted, in 1669, to tax the playhouses, which were situated in the disreputable part of town and had become centers of prostitution; but the ministers of the king intervened and the attempt to compel some restraint was unsuccessful.

In the reigns of William and Mary and of Anne a reaction is seen in the life of the court, and there appears a still greater progress in all classes of society.

The expulsion of the Stuarts brought about certain very positive results which made for progress in all directions. So too the principle of natural action and reaction was operating; but, considering the historical circumstances, it was only to be expected that the reaction toward a more moral and saner view of life should be less marked and less rapid than the preceding reaction from Puritanism.

Until after the downfall of the Stuarts, the Protestants in England had never been united; but after that event even Presbyterians joined with ecclesiastics of the Church of England in public ceremonies on terms of friendship. Now that the question of political

and religious supremacy was permanently settled, the Protestants were free to turn to some of the questions which are popularly supposed to be the real objects of religious organizations—worship and the encouragement of right living. However far it may have failed to measure up to modern ideas in these respects, the church now began to be a greater moral force.

The court became a very different sort of place. However far William might fall short of middle class standards of today, he was a very different sort of man from Charles or James, and had a very different influence. As opposed to the Catholicism of the Stuarts, he was a Presbyterian. Instead of haunting the theatre, where Charles found more than one mistress among the actresses, William never even showed himself at the theatre. Because of William's prolonged absences on the continent, during which Mary reigned in her own right, the person of the queen became more important than in former reigns. Mary "had been educated only to work embroidery, to play on the spinnet, and to read the Bible and the *Whole Duty of Man*."<sup>59</sup> "Her character was unimpeachable, and by the influence of the king and queen the whole court became most proper, even if it was somewhat dull." But unlike her husband, she went frequently to the theatre, where she showed special favor for Shadwell and where she ordered such plays as *The Old Bachelor*, *The Double Dealer*, and *The Committee*. It must be admitted that Mary's taste in regard to plays did not show great literary or moral discrimination.

Both under William and Mary and under Anne the court took positive grounds on moral questions. In Evelyn's *Diary* for February 19, 1690, we read:

"The impudence of both sexes was now become so greate and so universal, persons of all ranks keeping their courtesans publicly, that the King had lately directed a letter to the Bishops to order their Cleargy to preach against that sin, swearing, &c. and to put the Ecclesiastical Laws in execution without any indulgence."

Mary, on July 9, 1691, wrote to the justices of the peace directing that they execute all laws against the profanation of the Sabbath, and even went so far as to have constables stationed on street corners to capture pies and puddings that were being taken to the bakers to be cooked on that day. In 1697 and 1698 King

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59. Macaulay, *History of England*, Chapter VII.

William issued two orders concerning the acting of anything contrary to good morals or manners. Queen Anne, who never went to the public theatre, made frequent proclamations against immoral plays, masked women, and the admittance of spectators behind the scenes, and in 1703 she issued a proclamation against vice in general.

Altogether, the forces of the court and of the government were acting in accord to suppress the abuses which their predecessors had countenanced both by favor and by participation.

But however potent may have been the influence of the court, the real movement for social reform came from the people, whose will the court was really carrying out. The movement on the part of the people was forwarded by the rise of various societies which were established for moral, philanthropic, and religious purposes.<sup>60</sup>

The Society for the Reformation of Manners, inaugurated by a small number of gentlemen in 1692, was probably the most influential and best known of these organizations. It was organized primarily for the purpose of informing on evildoers, and that there might be no criticism concerning their sincerity, the fines were paid over to charity. In addition to carrying on this work of informing, the society established quarterly lectures on moral subjects, secured the preaching of sermons on its objects, and in 1699 it claimed to have secured thousands of convictions.<sup>61</sup> The church was brought into the movement by Archbishop Tenison's circular to the clergy encouraging them to coöperate with the laity in the movement. This movement went farther than the prosecution of overt acts against morality, for in 1701-2 the players at Lincoln's Inn Fields were prosecuted for uttering impious, lewd, and immoral expressions.<sup>62</sup>

60. During the reign of Charles not every one had been in entire sympathy with the state of the theatre. Evelyn, in a letter to Viscount Carnbury, February 9, 1664-1665, in speaking of the acting of plays on Saturday evenings says: "Plays are now with us become a licentious excess, and a vice, and need severe censors that should look as well to their morality as to their lines and numbers."

61. Traill, *Social England*, IV, 593.

62. *The Laureat*, p. 53. "I can remember, that soon after the publication of Collier's book, several informations were brought against the players, at the instance and at the expense of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, for immoral words and expressions, *contra bonos mores*, uttered on the stage. Several informers were placed in the pit, and other parts of the house, to note down the words spoke, and by whom, to be able to swear to them and many of them would have been ruined by these troublesome prosecutions, had not Queen Anne, well satisfied that these informers lived upon their oaths, and that what they did, proceeded not from conscience, but from interest, by a timely *nolle prosequi*, put an end to the inquisition."

## 4. COLLIER.

Collier's attack on the stage, published in 1698, was no doubt a potent influence in crystallizing public opinion in regard to the drama, but it does not stand alone; it is merely a sign of a movement which the stage had begun to notice and profit by several years previously. During the year 1698 not less than sixteen books and pamphlets were published in the controversy. Collier's book had great influence in furthering the work of reformation; but, low as was the tone of the drama at the time, one must confess that in some particulars Collier is radical and far-fetched in his arguments and conclusions.

Cibber, though he had two years previously written a play with a distinct reformatory and moral purpose, did not much relish Collier's attack or agree with it. In the prologue to *Xerxes* he intimates that Collier might prove a good index for those who desired to read immoral literature:

"Thus ev'n sage Collier too might be accus'd,  
If what h'as writ, thro' ignorance, abus'd:  
Girls may read him, not for the truth, he says,  
But to be pointed to the bawdy plays."

In *The Careless Husband* we find Lord Morelove saying:

"Plays now, indeed, one need not be so much afraid of; for since the late short-sighted view of them, vice may go on and prosper; the stage dares hardly show a vicious person speaking like himself, for fear of being call'd prophane for exposing him."

To this Lady Easy replies that,

"'Tis hard, indeed, when people won't distinguish between what's meant for contempt, and what for example."

Perhaps Cibber's most interesting contribution to the controversy is contained in his dedication of *Love Makes a Man*, published in the first edition, but omitted in the collected edition of his plays:

"But suppose the stage may have taken too loose a liberty? Is there nothing to be said for it? Have not all sciences been guilty? Was it to be expected in a reign of pleasure, peace and madness, that the poets should not be merry? Did not the court then lead up the dance? And did not the whole nation join in it? Was it not mere Joan Sanderson,<sup>63</sup> and did not the lawn-sleeves,

63. The "Joan Sanderson" was a dance in which each one of the company takes part. It began by the first dancer's choosing a partner, who in turn chose another, the chain continuing until each one had danced alone and with a partner. See G. C. M. Smith, *Fucus Histriomastix*, Introduction, p. xviii.

cuffs, and cassocks fill up the measure? But since those dancing days are over, I hope our enemies will give us leave to grow wise, and sober, as well as the rest of our neighbors: Why shall we not have the liberty to reform, as well as the clergy, and lawyers? I believe upon a fair examination we may find, that prophaneness, cruelty, and passive obedience, are now less than ever the business of the stage, the bench or the pulpit; and I doubt not, but we can produce examples of new plays, lawyers, and pastors that have met with success without being obliged to immorality, bribery, or politics . . .

"Now if the stage must needs down, because 'tis possible it may seduce, as instruct; the same rule of policy might forbid the use of physic, because not only their patients, but physicians themselves die of common diseases; or call in the milled crowns, because they are but so many patterns for coiners to counterfeit by, or might as well suppress the Courts of Judicature, because some persons have suffered for what a succeeding reign has made a new law, that makes that law that sentenced them illegal: The same conclusion might discountenance our religion, because we sometimes find pride, hypocrisy, avarice, and ignorance in its teachers: So that if our zealous reformers do not stick fairly to their method we may in time hope to see our nation flourish without either wit, health, money, law, conscience, or religion. . . .

"But this sort of reformation I hope will never be thoroughly wrought, while the king, and the Established Church have any friends: The stage I am sure was never heartily oppressed but by the enemies of both."

Though Cibber thought Collier extreme and unjust in his criticism, his own attitude concerning the abuses of the stage was hardly less censorious than Collier's, but he blames the audiences for the low moral standards of the entertainments:

"However gravely we may assert, that Profit ought always to be inseparable from the Delight of the Theatre; nay, admitting that the Pleasure would be heighten'd by the uniting them; yet, while Instruction is so little the Concern of the Auditor, how can we hope that so choice a Commodity will come to a Market where there is so seldom a Demand for it?

"It is not to the Actor therefore, but to the vitiated and low Taste of the Spectator, that the Corruptions of the Stage (of what kind soever) have been owing."<sup>64</sup>

His own attitude, which he held from the first of his career as a dramatist, may be illustrated what he says in the *Apology*:<sup>65</sup>

"Yet such Plays (entirely my own) were not wanting at least, in what our most admired Writers seem'd to neglect, and without

64. *Apology*, I, 85.

65. *Ibid.*, I, 194-5.



which, I cannot allow the most taking Play, to be intrinsically good, or to be a Work, upon which a Man of Sense and Probity should value himself: I mean when they do not, as well *prodesse*, as *delectare*, give Profit with Delight! The *Utile Dolci* was, of old, equally the Point; and has always been my Aim, however wide of the Mark, I may have shot my Arrow. It has often given me Amazement, that our best Authors of that time, could think the Wit, and Spirit of their Scenes, could be an Excuse for making the Looseness of them publick. The many Instances of their Talents so abused, are too glaring, to need a closer Comment, and are sometimes too gross to be recited. If then to have avoided this Imputation, or rather to have had the Interest, and Honour of Virtue always in view, can give Merit to a Play; I am contented that my Readers should think such Merit, the All, that mine have to boast of.—Libertines of mere Wit, and Pleasure, may laugh at these grave Laws, that would limit a lively Genius: But every sensible honest Man, conscious of their Truth, and Use, will give these Ralliers Smile for Smile, and shew a due Contempt for their Merriment.”

Davies tells us:<sup>66</sup>

“So well did Cibber, though a professed libertine through life, understand the dignity of virtue, that no comic author has drawn more delightful and striking pictures of it. Mrs. Porter, on reading a part, in which Cibber had painted virtue in the strongest and most lively colors, asked him how it came to pass, that a man, who could draw such admirable portraits of goodness, should yet live as if he were a stranger to it?—‘Madam,’ said Colley, ‘the one is absolutely necessary, the other is not.’”

Possibly this inconsistency in personal conduct and public confession explains why comedies which aimed to teach lessons of virtue were sentimental and did not ring true. The men who wrote them wrote from the head and not from the heart, influenced by a growing public demand and without real sincerity or conviction.

##### 5. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESTORATION COMEDY.

Restoration comedy up to about 1696, while it was essentially a native development, was influenced both in technique and in content by the drama to which the court had been accustomed in its exile in France. The Jonsonian comedy was developing both in the period immediately preceding the Commonwealth and during the Restoration into the same sort of thing that we have here, and Shadwell, poet laureate and especial favorite of

66. *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 432.



Queen Mary, definitely took the work of Jonson as his model. The Jonsonian satire had thrown emphasis on fundamental traits of human nature, but in this later type satire is centered on manners, dress, the non-essential elements of life, though the characters continue to be embodiments of single traits. Molière, whose earliest effective follower in England was Etherege, taught the English writers of the comedy of manners to aim at polish, refinement of style and dialogue, and his influence confirmed the tendency of English comedy to follow the unities as they were then understood. Restoration comedy, then, is native Jonsonian comedy, influenced by the comedy of Molière.<sup>67</sup> The chief literary sources of its plots are the comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Molière, of Corneille, and Spanish comedies and novels.

Though the late Elizabethans had been gross in word, there had always been in their work a tendency to punish vice and reward virtue, or at least to make vice ridiculous. But in the Restoration this grossness becomes grossness of word, character, and idea, and it is not the violator of virtue that is made ridiculous, but his victim. The Elizabethan gaiety, spontaneity, healthy overflow of spirits, become a cynicism which is absurd in its artificiality and deliberate pose. The Jonsonian reaction from earlier Elizabethan romanticism continues its advance toward realism.

The Restoration dramatist lacks the power to construct effective plots. He is able to handle his separate incidents with skill, but when it comes to sustaining an action through five acts, he fails. His chief fault lies in too great intricacy, excessive elaboration, and complexity, which are due to his endeavor to tell too many stories. In the construction of his plays he commonly takes two, and sometimes three, plays from Molière, or Beaumont and Fletcher, to form one play of his own. Hence there is in the handling of the plot a lack of unity. Furthermore, in his extreme elaboration of single situations, which one must admit have qualities to make them lively and interesting on the stage, the dramatist fails in the great essential quality of probability; if one regards the unity of time, he makes his stories impossible. Lack of sequence is caused by the constant interruption of conversation, which is brilliant and entertaining in itself, but has nothing to do with the story.

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67. See Miles, *The Influence of Molière on Restoration Comedy*, 1910; published after this paper was written.

The dramatist tends to the elaboration of stock themes, dealing with the pursuit of illicit pleasure, assignations, and love intrigues. The typical story might be stated as follows: a young man is entangled with one or more women, a widow, the wife of an elderly or foolish husband, or a mistress whom he is keeping or who is keeping him, and while he is carrying on these intrigues he falls in love with the virtuous young woman he eventually wins. Sometimes his mistresses object to his marrying some one else, sometimes they do not, and in the latter case the opposing force is centered in a rapacious guardian or some other complicating person or circumstance. There are usually many minor love affairs, sometimes legitimate, sometimes not, and usually so complicated that it is difficult to keep the various threads separate. Collier did no injustice when he said that "the stage poets make their principal persons vicious and reward them at the end of the play."

The love is mere sensuality. There is tacit acknowledgment that the men will be untrue to their wives and a fear on the part of the husbands that their wives will cuckold them.<sup>68</sup> This fear is not because of any moral scruples, but is merely because of the ridicule that cuckoldom brought on the husband. The treatment is frankly gross, licentious, cynical.

In a sense this treatment is highly realistic; to this extent, that it is a general reflection of the standards and manners of the life of the court. The fashions are contemporary, the manners and morals are those of the upper classes. The playwrights confine themselves to a limited section of but a part of the people. Social and religious institutions are treated so as to make them ridiculous and contemptible.

That any other treatment would have been difficult is seen by considering the relationship existing between the theatre and the court. The theatre had its authority for existence directly from the court, one theatre receiving its license from the King, the other from the Duke of York, while the companies of actors were known as the King's or the Duke's servants.<sup>69</sup> These licenses were more-over revocable at the pleasure of those who gave them. Controversies and differences within the theatre were often settled

68. Celadon, in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode*, enters marriage with the distinct expectation that his wife will be untrue to him.

69. At the Restoration ten of the actors were attached to the household establishment as the king's menial servants, and ten yards of scarlet cloth with an amount of lace were allowed them for liveries. This connection lasted until Anne's time. Genest, II, 362.

personally by the King or Duke, and Charles is said to have suggested subjects to the dramatists in many instances. With so direct and personal a relation, anything other than compliance with the taste of the court could result in nothing but the downfall of the theatre. The theatre's very life depended on its selection and presentation of themes that would satisfy and reflect the taste of the most morally degraded court that England has ever had.

The characterization in these plays is conventional and often vague. For example, it may be laid down as an almost invariable rule that a widow is never virtuous. In the embodiment of a single trait there is the continued tendency to exaggeration seen in the "humourous" characterization of Jonson, with the same use of descriptive names—Courtall, Mrs. Frail, Lady Wishfort, Justice Clodpate—to save the labor of characterization. The characters are likewise lacking in complexity and development.

There is the tendency to Jonsonian division of characters into dupes and dupers,<sup>70</sup> but this division is not so clear as in Jonson, nor is the division based on the essential qualities of human nature, but is rather on the basis of wit and power in repartee. The heroes are all witty, usually wealthy, popular, and their life work is the pursuit of women. The women are all witty, beautiful, and all rakes, except the heroine, and even the heroines bid fair to become so in a few months after marriage. The hero or heroine of one play might be the hero or heroine of any other play so far as any distinctive characterization is concerned.

There is the pretended wit, a simpleton who apes the men of wit and fashion, who thinks himself most clever, and who is perfectly unconscious of the fact that he is being made a butt for the wit of the sensible characters. Such are the Dapperwits, the Witwounds, and the Tattles. Somewhat similar is the fop who imitates the French, thinks only of his dress, his appearance, and the figure he makes. He is all ostentation, is entirely self-centered and simple in his mental processes, but is really not such a fool as one imagines at first. Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, and Cibber's Sir Novelty Fashion—the Lord Foppingtons of *The Relapse* and *The Careless Husband*—are two well drawn presentations of this character. An interesting female type is the Miss Hoyden-Prue-Hippolyta young woman, who has been kept in secluded

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70. Elizabeth Woodbridge, *Studies in Jonson's Comedies*, *Yale Studies in English*, IV.

ignorance of the world, but who shows a sudden ingenuity, knowledge of the world, and desire for the sensual joys of life. There are, of course, the elderly cuckolds, dominated and fooled by their wives, and the wives who profess virtue but do not practise it.

That the view here given is not prejudiced by modern standards may be seen by a description of the characters by one of the dramatists themselves. Shadwell in the preface to *The Sullen Lovers* expresses himself, not without vigor:

“But in the Plays, which have been wrote of late, there is no such thing as perfect Character, but the two chief Persons are commonly a Swearing, Drinking, Whoring, Ruffian for a Lover, and an impudent ill-bred *Tomrig* for a Mistress, and these are the fine People of the play; and . . . almost any thing is proper for them to say; but their chief Subject is Bawdy, and Profaneness, which they call *Brisk Writing*, when the most dissolute of Men, that relish those things well enough in Private, are shock’d at ’em in Publick.”

The dialogue, which often interrupts the movement of the plot, and often surpasses in interest the more solid quality of representation of life, is usually marked by the most brilliant and biting wit, by keenly satiric repartee, and by epigrammatic polish. The dialogue has often nothing to do with the story, but is merely the exhibition of the author’s ability in the cynical treatment of contemporary manners. The attitude is one of satire and raillery against all established institutions, against marriage, the manners of society, the Puritans, the newly developing sciences, the court, dueling, the country and its inhabitants, the opera, the new songs and novels, the affectation of foreign airs, the adoption of foreign words, poetry and dilettante writing, polite literary conversation, legal abuses, and almost everything that one can conceive.

The locality in which the plays are set is extremely narrow at first, being confined to the town; for most of the plays are set in London, in localities familiar to the audiences. Within the class and localities to which the comedy restricts itself, it is a most interesting social document; but it must always be remembered that it is no sense representative of the whole people. Sometimes we are taken to Spain or Italy, but it is Spain or Italy only in name, the people and the customs are all English. The scene may sometimes be one of the fashionable watering places in England; but it is never in the despised country.

Whether one agrees with it or not it is well to keep in mind Lamb's defense in his essay *On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century*:

"We have been spoiled with . . . the . . . drama of common life; where the moral point is everything; where, instead of the fictitious half-believed personages of the stage (the phantoms of old comedy) we recognize ourselves, our brothers, aunts, kinsfolk, allies, patrons, enemies,—the same as in life. . . .

"I do not know how it is with others, but I feel the better always for the perusal of one of Congreve's—nay, why should I not add even of Wycherley's—comedies. I am the gayer at least for it; and I could never connect those sports of a witty fancy in any shape with any result to be drawn from them to imitation in real life. They are a world of themselves almost as much as fairyland. . . . But in its own world do we feel the creature is so very bad?—The Fainalls and the Mirabels, the Dorimants and the Lady Touchwoods, in their own sphere, do not offend my moral sense; in fact they do not appeal to it at all. They seem engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws, or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is. . . . He [Congreve] has spread a privation of moral light . . . over his creations; and his shadows flit before you without distinction or preference. Had he introduced a good character, a single gush of moral feeling, a revulsion of the judgment to actual life and actual duties, the impertinent Goshen would have only lighted to the discovery of deformities, which now are none, because we think them none. . . .

" . . . When we are among them [the characters of Congreve and Wycherley], we are amongst a chaotic people. We are not to judge them by our usages. No reverend institutions are insulted by their proceedings,—for they have none among them. No peace of families is violated,—for no family ties exist among them. No purity of the marriage bed is stained,—for none is supposed to have a being. . . . There is neither right nor wrong,—gratitude or its opposite,—claim or duty,—paternity or sonship. . . .

"The whole is a passing pageant. . . . But, like Don Quixote, we take part against the puppets, and quite as impertinently. . . . We would indict our very dreams."

## 6. BEGINNINGS OF THE CHANGE IN THE DRAMA.

Such had been the conditions surrounding the drama and in the drama itself before the reformation began. When one comes to look at the stage and the audiences, one finds very little indica-

tion of change at first. In 1682 there seems to have been objection to *London Cuckolds* on the ground of indecency, and Ravenscroft in the prologue to *Dame Dobson* (1682) claims to have complied with the objections which had been raised by making his own play dull and civil. In 1684 appeared Southerne's first comedy, *The Disappointment*, which he calls a "play," and in this we have the serious treatment of the marriage relations and the preservation of a wife's chastity. Throughout, Southerne's tendency was towards morality.

In 1696 there begins a real and easily discernible movement towards the moral treatment of dramatic themes. *The She Gallants* (1696) was so offensive to the ladies that it had to be withdrawn; in *She Ventures and He Wins* (1696) the man who would carry on an amour with a married woman is exposed and tricked and made the butt; and in Mrs. Manley's *The Lost Lover* (1696) there is the noticeable introduction of a virtuous wife.

In 1697, the epilogue to *Boadicea*, a tragedy, tells us that

"Once only smutty jests could please the town,  
But now (Heav'n help our trade) they'll not go down."

Waterhouse<sup>71</sup> finds traces of sentimentality in Vanbrugh's *Aesop*, which appeared the same year. Then in 1698 matters were brought to a head by Collier, and we find Congreve's *Double Dealer* advertised to be acted "with several expressions omitted," while in *The Way of the World* (1700) his muse is somewhat more chaste. *The Provoked Wife* was altered, probably in 1706, so that the clergy might not seem to be attacked.

From this time on the changed attitude was increasingly manifest in the new plays, though the old were still acted with little or no change.

In *The State of the Case Restated*<sup>72</sup> it is contended that the royal patent to the Drury Lane Theatre was given to Sir Richard Steele for the purpose of correcting the abuses of the theatre, but that Sir Richard had not done this; in fact that

"The same lewd plays were acted and reviewed without any material alteration, which gave occasion for that universal complaint against the English stage, of lewdness and debauchery, from all the sober and religious part of the nation; the whole business of comedy continuing all this time to be the criminal intrigues

<sup>71</sup>. *The Development of Sentimental Comedy in the Eighteenth Century, Anglia*, XXX.

<sup>72</sup>. *The Theatre*, II, 511. By John Dennis. His temper and prejudice often destroy the value of his writings as impartial evidence, but in this case he is right.



of fornication and adultery, ridiculing of marriage, virtue, and integrity, and giving a favorable turn to vicious characters, and instructing loose people how to carry on their lewd designs with plausibility and success: thus among other plays they have revived *The Country Wife*, *Sir Fopling Flutter*, *The Rover*, *The Libertine Destroyer*, and several others, and it is remarkable, that the knight, or coadjutors, had condemned *Sir Fopling Flutter*, as one of the most execrable and vicious plays that ever was performed in public."

The change that was occurring may be fairly illustrated by quotations from plays by Etherege and Steele, which are characteristic of the alterations not only as to morals but as to moralizing. In speaking of marriage Etherege says, "your nephew ought to conceal it [his marriage] for a time, madam, since marriage has lost its good name; prudent men seldom expose their own reputations, till 'tis convenient to justify their wives;"<sup>73</sup> while Steele's sentiment is that "wedlock is hell if at least one side does not love, as it would be Heaven if both did."<sup>74</sup>

#### 7. CIBBER'S COMEDIES.

Cibber at the very outset of his career as a dramatist, in *Love's Last Shift* (1696), deliberately attempted to reform the stage, and that the audience was ready for the innovation is shown by the way it was received, for we are told that "never were spectators more happy in easing their minds by uncommon and repeated plaudits. The honest tears, shed by the audience, conveyed a strong reproach to our licentious poets, and was to Cibber the highest mark of honor."<sup>75</sup> Davies further gives Cibber the credit of being the first in reforming the English stage, and of founding English sentimental comedy. "The first comedy, acted since the Restoration, in which were preserved purity of manners and decency of language, with a due respect to the honor of the marriage-bed, was Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, or *The Fool in Fashion*."<sup>76</sup> Cibber himself makes no claim to decency of language, nor is it found to any greater extent in this play than in the other plays of the period. Certainly there can be nothing bolder than the first act, or the epilogue, which reads as follows:

"Now, gallants, for the author. First, to you  
Kind city gentlemen o' th' middle row;

73. *The Man of Mode*, V, ii.

74. *The Funeral*, I, i.

75. Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 412.

76. *Ibid.*, III, 409.



He hopes you nothing to his charge can lay,  
 There's not a cuckold made in all his play.  
 Nay, you must own, if you believe your eyes,  
 He draws his pen against your enemies:  
 For he declares, today, he merely strives  
 To maul the beaux—because they maul your wives.  
 Nor, sirs, to you whose sole religion's drinking,  
 Whoring, roaring, without the pain of thinking,  
 He fears he's made a fault you'll ne'er forgive,  
 A crime beyond the hopes of a reprieve:  
 An honest rake forego the joys of life,  
 His whores and wine, t' embrace a dull chaste wife!  
 Such out-of-fashion stuff! but then again,  
 He's lewd for above four acts, gentlemen.

Four acts for your coarse palates were design'd,  
 But then the ladies taste is more refin'd,  
 They, for Amanda's sake, will sure be kind."

The main action, that which deals with the reformation of the wandering husband, seems to be original with Cibber in every respect. It deals with the reformation of a husband who eight or ten years before has deserted his young wife for a dissolute life on the continent, and who returns to England still more degenerate in mind and morals than when he left, and so entirely depleted in purse that he has not money enough to buy a meal or pay for a night's lodging for himself and his servant. The husband is finally led to return to his wife, whose appearance has so changed that he does not recognize her, by her pretense of being a new mistress. This subterfuge is more or less remotely suggestive of Shakspeare's *All's Well that Ends Well* and Shirley's *Gamester*, both of which have been suggested as its source; but it owes nothing to them in the working out of the situation.

The theme is practically that of *The Careless Husband*: the reformation of a husband not entirely spoiled at heart. The moral teaching is that there is the same pleasure in legitimate enjoyment as in the baser and illicit sort.

The innovation consists in the very moral ending of the piece, particularly in the definite decision of the hero to reform, a determination which he expresses as follows:

"By my example taught, let every man, whose fate has bound him to a marry'd life, beware of letting loose his wild desires:

for if experience may be allow'd to judge, I must proclaim the folly of a wandering passion. The greatest happiness we can hope on earth,

And sure the nearest to the joys above,  
Is the chaste rapture of a virtuous love."

It is to be noticed that the illicit affair of Sir Novelty Fashion and Mrs. Flareit is made ridiculous and not happy at the end, nor does Sir Novelty acquire a mistress or a wife who has previously been chaste. Likewise there is no husband who is made ridiculous by being cuckolded, and the only amour, if it can be called an amour, that which Amanda's maid unwillingly has with Snap, is made right the next morning by the marriage of the two.

On the other hand, the play, aside from these particulars, exhibits the technique and the material of the typical Restoration comedy. The chief incident deals in most frank style with the sex relations of the hero and heroine, treated essentially in the Restoration way, with the exception that the audience knows they are man and wife while the characters do not. The cellar incident is as frank and gross as anything of the sort in the earlier drama, though in this case the final outcome is a wedding. There is the same succession of lively and disconnected incidents, incidents which would go well on the stage, and which make up five separate threads of story. The substitution of the name of one person for another in the marriage bond is the same sort of thing that occurs over and over again in the earlier comedy.<sup>77</sup>

The characters represent the same more or less stiff drawing of conventional figures. Sir Novelty Fashion is of the same family as Sir Fopling Flutter; Lovelace and Young Worthy are the same drunken rakes as those who make the principal characters in the unreformed drama, with the exception that here they are not presented to us as carrying on their amours. Snap is the witty servingman who is invariably paired with the maid of the heroine in Restoration comedy. There is the same presentation of local scenes, particularly that in the park; there is the same coarse speech; and there is the same interruption of the story by raillery.

But the play as already suggested is a very distinct step in advance in its treatment of fundamental morality, and marks a conscious

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77. The substitution of one person for another in the marriage ceremony, or a false marriage, are favorite devices of Congreve. See, for instance, *The Old Bachelor* and *Love for Love*.

beginning of a new mode; not an inconsiderable achievement for the first play of an author twenty-four years old.

The two plots of *Woman's Wit* (1697) are entirely dissimilar in tone and dramatic handling, and, moreover, have no essential connection with each other. The main plot, which gives the name to the piece, is in the Restoration manner, while the sub-plot, which deals with the Rakishes, is in the mould of the minor late Elizabethans. In its portrayal of manners it belongs to the type represented by the plays of Brome, marked by coarseness rather than finish, and implying about the same standard of morals.

The main plot consists of a series of complications caused by the efforts of Longeville to unmask Leonora's unfaithfulness to Lovemore, to whom she is engaged. She convinces Lovemore that Longeville's efforts are the result of a plot, the purpose of which is to alienate Lovemore and Leonora so that Longeville may have her to himself; and there then follows one complication after another, until the characters are at last gathered together and Leonora is made to confess her duplicity.

The situation on which the main action is based is original and highly dramatic, but in order to maintain the intrigue Cibber has had to use incidents which are marked by improbability and dramatic blindness to such an extent that the action becomes wearisome. Cibber seems to be groping for something different from the conventional Restoration intrigue. His conception is worthy of more success than he attained, but he lacked the dramatic skill and experience to carry it out.

Some of the character drawing is good. Longeville and Lovemore are rather decent young men, but are no doubt too sentimental for success on the stage at this time. The Rakishes are overdrawn and farcical. The women, with the exception of Leonora, are lacking in the spontaneity and wit demanded of seventeenth and early eighteenth century heroines, and like the men are possibly too sentimental. Leonora is the intriguer and is the best drawn and most important personage in the play. Her downfall is the result of her own character and conduct, and in the disapproval of her character and actions Cibber has repeated, to some extent, views he expressed in his first play.

The vulgar sub-plot which deals with Old Rakish and Young Rakish, when separated from *Woman's Wit* and acted in 1707 as *The School Boy*, was a greater success than the original play.

With the exception of the change in the names of some of the personages, minor alterations of the dialogue, the omission of parts of the incidents, and the addition of such incidents as are necessary to make it stand by itself, the play is verbatim as it appeared when a part of *Woman's Wit*.

From the point of view of the reformation of the stage it must be confessed that *Woman's Wit* was not of great importance. The moral tone of the main action is high; at least virtue is rewarded and vice disgraced, and there are no amours carried on. But the sub-action, which was later transformed into *The School Boy*, is entirely opposed to both good taste and good morals, and after a series of low comedy scenes, ends with the promise of Young Rakish to Master Johnny that he will take Johnny to the play-house, where the latter may satisfy his disappointment in the failure to marry his mother's woman. Although notable progress in the morality of the drama had been made, as we have seen, the fact that this sub-action was successfully presented by itself shows that the taste of the theatre-going public was not yet entirely regenerate.

*Love Makes a Man* (1701) is a rather close adaptation of two of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays,<sup>78</sup> in which Cibber does not pretend to any serious purpose. "For masks, we've scandal, and for beaus, French airs." And yet his moralizing and sentimental tendency cannot be entirely restrained, for when Carlos, the hero of the play, does turn from his books to love, he speaks in a most heightened and sentimental strain. So too the efforts of Louisa to seduce him are met with sentiments of lofty morality which are actuated by his sincere love for Angelina. The Restoration lover would not have hesitated in the slightest degree to enjoy all that Louisa offered and his wife-to-be would have taken it as a matter of course, probably would have joked with her confidante, if not with the hero, on the subject. But with Cibber not only is the attitude concerning this sort of thing changed, but in his alteration he has omitted one incident<sup>79</sup> that would have been a source of great delight to a Restoration audience, and has softened the language throughout, so that the coarseness which marks his original has largely disappeared. No one undergoes a moral reformation, for Louisa has not been evil in her life,

78. *The Elder Brother* and *The Custom of the Country*.

79. Rutilio's sojourn with Sulpita. *The Custom of the Country*, III, iii; IV, iv.

and this one unsuccessful effort at seduction cures her. But the play has two characteristics of the sentimental type; it is perfectly moral in action, and it has some expression of sentimental philosophy.

*She Would and She Would Not* (1702) is probably more in accordance with modern taste than any other play Cibber wrote. In this regard for good taste as well as good morals it is significant of the change in English comedy, and though it is not sentimental, it indicates Cibber's readiness to adopt and lead the new mode. In its technique it reminds us of the Spanish intrigue plays of Dryden; but it is perfectly moral, and the two lovers do not employ their time, when away from the main business of winning their wives, in carrying on intrigues with other women.

*The Careless Husband* (acted 1704) is Cibber's masterpiece in sentimental comedy. In it he has reached greater excellence than in his former plays in plot and in character presentation, and in the ability to make his plot and moral purpose work out consistently and logically. The reformation of Loveless in *Love's Last Shift* strikes one as not in keeping with his character; one feels that his relapse<sup>80</sup> is quite the natural thing to happen. In this play, however, the hero's character is presented from the first in a way that prepares one for the final reformation. In this particular Cibber rises above his contemporaries in comedy.

In *The Careless Husband* Cibber lays claim to deliberate and serious moral purpose and deals, as he did in his first play, with the reclaiming of a licentious husband by a virtuous wife. Dibdin extravagantly says of it that "it was a school for elegant manners, and an example for honorable actions." Cibber expresses himself in regard to his purpose, in the dedication, as follows:

'The best criticks have long and justly complain'd, that the coarseness of most characters in our late Comedies, have been unfit entertainments for People of Quality, especially the ladies: and therefore I was long in hopes that some able pen (whose expectation did not hang upon the profits of success) wou'd generously attempt to reform the Town into a better taste than the World generally allows 'em: but nothing of that kind having lately appear'd, that would give me the opportunity of being wise at another's expence, I found it impossible any longer to resist the secret temptation of my vanity, and so e'en struck the first blow myself: and the event has now convinc'd me, that whoever sticks closely to Nature, can't easily write above the understandings of

80. Which Vanbrugh portrayed in his play, *The Relapse* (1697).

the Galleries, tho' at the same time he may possibly deserve applause of the Boxes."

But in *The Careless Husband*, in contrast with what he had previously written in this field, the tone of the entire play is moral, not merely that of the fifth act, the play is worked out consistently, and the offensive effect of an incongruous mixture of standards is lacking. It belongs distinctly to the sentimental type, and is the best of the early school.

In the prologue Cibber gives a summary of the kind of characters that should illustrate the moral the comedy writer has as his theme:

"Of all the various Vices of the Age,  
And shoals of fools expos'd upon the Stage,  
How few are lasht that call for Satire's rage!  
What can you think to see our Plays so full  
Of Madmen, Coxcombs, and the drivelling Fool?  
Of Cits, of Sharpers, Rakes, and roaring Bullies,  
Of Cheats, of Cuckolds, Aldermen and Cullies?  
Wou'd not one swear, 'twere taken for a rule,  
That Satire's rod in the Dramatick School,  
Was only meant for the incorrigible Fool?  
As if too Vice and Folly were confined  
To the vile scum alone of human kind,  
Creatures a Muse should scorn; such abject trash  
Deserves not Satire's but the Hangman's lash.

We rather think the persons fit for Plays,  
Are those whose birth and education says  
They've every help that shou'd improve mankind,  
Yet still live slaves to a vile tainted mind."

In this play Cibber continues the general practice of basing dramatic technique upon that of the Restoration drama. We find the same multiplicity of plots, though there is here a material reduction in their number. But here the various plots are more consistently bound together and more logically worked out. The hero is a somewhat refined Restoration character; he has more gentleness and goodness in him, but the course he pursues is typical of the earlier plays in that he is carrying on two amours during the play and at the end he abandons those intrigues; with this difference, however, that the reformation of the hero of *The Careless Husband* is felt to be permanent.

The love story of Lord Morelove and Lady Betty, which forms the sub-action, is in the best style of the comedy of manners.



It, as well as the main action, reminds one in its finished workmanship of the best plays written during the latter part of the preceding century.

There is a distinct effort to teach the advantage of moral living, in the unhappy outcome of the illicit affairs and in the happy outcome of the legitimate. The situation in which Edging and Sir Charles are discovered asleep, which proved too gross for Cibber's audience, is nevertheless handled in a manner to show disapproval; the Restoration dramatist would have been salacious and humorous. Sir Charles's feeling of guilt after this scene, however, is an entirely new note.

Some of the characters are stock figures. Lady Betty is the usual coquette, is a Millamant type, but is altogether more human and modern; Lord Foppington is the continuation of Sir Novelty Fashion, whom we recognize as a type which appears in Etherege and Crowne; and Sir Charles, until his reformation, is, in his conduct, the Restoration rake, with, however, distinctly more humanity. His whole-heartedness and inherent honor make one forgive his lapse in conduct.

Other characters indicate a new mode. Lady Easy is a modest, virtuous, capable wife, full of moderation and tact, with the gentleness of the modern ideal woman. She belongs to the patient Griselda type, and her situation, which contains not a little pathos, is handled in a way to gain the sympathy of the audience. This is a new and noteworthy contribution in the direction of the fully developed type of sentimental comedy. Even in spite of Sir Charles's defection in conduct, we recognize an inherent goodness in his nature. Lord Morelove is the preaching, sentimentalizing type, serious minded and upright, the sort of character that Cibber has presented in Lord Lovemore in *Woman's Wit* and Elder Worthy in *Love's Last Shift*; a character who seldom appears in the Restoration period, or, if he does appear, is ridiculed. In this presentation of a successful lover, lacking in wit and inconstancy, Cibber was not following the convention of the preceding drama, which usually made its heroes witty scamps.

While we still have light banter and raillery, they are primarily used to display character or further the plot, functions which they disregard in the Restoration plays. The theme and its working out not only deal with the reformation of the loose character, but also endeavor to present an admirable example of womanhood



who shows a proper fidelity to her husband in spite of all his delinquencies. In the presentation of this high type of character Cibber has again become an innovator and has made a positive contribution to the drama of the period.

In his adaptation of the plays by Dryden<sup>81</sup> in *The Comical Lovers* (1707) Cibber has not attempted any changes, and the play is of no importance in the development of comedy. It was regarded merely as a revival of Dryden's work, and was acted along with other old plays during the same season, largely because of an antiquarian interest.

The two plays from which this is made go well together and present something of the best that Dryden did in the line of satiric comedy, and no doubt the social satire was almost as pertinent in Cibber's time as it had been forty or fifty years earlier.

But the moral standard, which is almost always present, even if in the background, in Cibber's own plays, is almost entirely lacking here. Celadon expects to be cuckolded, but would rather be cuckolded by Florimel (who reminds one very strongly of Congreve's Millamant even in the stipulations before their agreement of marriage), than by any one else. So too in the complications in the second story in the play, the moral defections are humorous merely because they are immoral, and there is no disapproval expressed or implied. In Cibber's own work he may retain his disapproval until the last act, but the moral standard always appears in some way or other, so that this play is essentially uncharacteristic of Cibber's work.

*The Double Gallant* (1707) is an adaption of the same sort as *The Comical Lovers*, derived from Restoration plays,<sup>82</sup> but it does have more significance. It is marked by the same general tone of moral irresponsibility and lightness, but without the actual culmination of delinquencies; there is the same raillery, somewhat curtailed, and the hero, as in those plays, involves himself in intrigue with several women at once. There is more respect for morals in the general conduct of the piece. The change is indicated in the handling of the source. Burnaby<sup>83</sup> has made use of what is probably the most notorious and grossest incident in Restoration comedy, Horner's subterfuge in *The Country Wife*, but has modified

81. The comic scenes from *Marriage a la Mode* and *The Maiden Queen*.

82. Centlivre, *Love at a Venture*; Burnaby, *The Ladies Visiting Day*, and *The Reformed Wife*.

83. *The Ladies Visiting Day*.

some of the elements of the intrigue. Cibber has prevented the successful outcome of the intrigue, and has entirely omitted the unpleasant features.

*The Lady's Last Stake* (1707), in the handling of a serious theme, seems the most modern of Cibber's comedies; it represents almost an approach to the modern problem play in the Lord and Lady Wronglove story and in the theme of the Lord George and Lady Gentle story. It is a fully developed comedy of the sentimental type of this period, with its four acts of intrigue, its reconciliation at the end, and its extremely moral teaching. Cibber makes two statements of his theme, first in the dedication, and then in the prologue. His statement in the dedication is as follows:

"A Play, without a just Moral, is a poor and trivial Undertaking; and 'tis from the Success of such Pieces, that Mr. Collier was furnish'd with an advantageous Pretence of laying his unmerciful Axe to the Root of the Stage. Gaming is a Vice that has undone more innocent Principles than any one Folly that's in Fashion; therefore I chose to expose it to the Fair Sex in its most hideous Form, by reducing a Woman of honour to stand the presumptuous Addresses of a Man, whom neither her Virtue nor Inclination would let her have the least Taste to. Now 'tis not impossible but some Man of Fortune, who has a handsome Lady, and a great deal of Money to throw away, may, from this startling hint, think it worth his while to find his Wife some less hazardous Diversion. If that should ever happen, my end of writing this Play is answer'd."

The plot centers around a most lively intrigue, but shows a departure from the Restoration type. Cibber seems to have devised his own plot from observation rather than to have taken it from the work of some one else, though in his characters he shows some imitation of characters in older plays. Miss Notable is a Miss Prue type, but the action of the play preserves her virtue and indicates disapproval of the effort to seduce her. There is a wide difference between this and the course of Congreve's character who rushes eagerly to her bedroom followed by Tattle.<sup>84</sup> So too in the relations of Lady Wronglove with her husband there enters a new note. Not only does Cibber show her a virtuous woman, but he recognizes the infidelity of the husband as grave enough to merit not only condemnation but punishment; and though he does not carry his story so far as to inflict on him his just deserts, he recognizes the right of the wife to resent Lord Wronglove's action, although he clearly feels her resentment is unwise.

84. *Love for Love*, II, xi.

Sir Friendly Moral, who reconciles the various couples, furnishes the somewhat sentimental moralizings, and seems to be the mouth-piece of the author.

One does not waste much sympathy on either Lord or Lady Wronglove in their bickerings, and their reconciliation at the end through the good offices of Sir Friendly is decidedly lacking in probability, in view of the way in which they have been previously presented. This *dénouement* is brought about by a typical *deus ex machina* device, in which Sir Friendly, by supplying money to one of the characters, and by using his exceeding wisdom and knowledge with another set of characters, brings about the happy ending. Cibber was not unlike the other late seventeenth and early eighteenth century writers in his inability to bring his plays to a logical and probable conclusion. He was hampered by his theory that the element of surprise should enter into the happy ending, and hence he often seems to feel compelled to introduce a new force very late in the play.

The characters in the main action are somewhat serious and lacking in attractiveness. But those in the comic action, Lord George, Mrs. Conquest, and Miss Notable, are much more lively sources of interest. Miss Notable, as already stated, is a Miss Prue type, though she is probably not to be described as a "silly, awkward country girl." She is essentially a sophisticated city miss, but her desires and ambitions, as well as some of her ingenuous characteristics, are similar to those of the Miss Prue type. She starts a flirtation with each new man she meets in order to pique the last new man, who in like manner had his turn. The discomfiture of Lord George when Miss Notable avows her love for Mrs. Conquest, who is in the disguise of a man, is very clever.

It is hard to believe that an honorable gentleman, as Sir George is described as being, would cheat at cards even for the purpose of seducing another man's wife. It is in just such conceptions as this that Cibber's superficiality is shown, a superficiality which prevented him from writing great drama notwithstanding his knowledge of technical requirements.

In the situations of Lady Gentle and Mrs. Conquest, especially in that of the latter, there is a distinct element of pathos, similar to that in *The Careless Husband*. As in *The Careless Husband*, this pathos is due not merely to the situation, but depends likewise on the nature of the persons presented. In this respect

it is superior to the later sentimental comedy, in which the pathos depends more largely on the situation alone.

In its serious elements *The Lady's Last Stake* attacks what are without doubt notable human failings, and the dialogue at its best reminds us of some of the best Congrevian sort. But Cibber's practice as to the happy outcome and his theory that there must be a surprise at the end of a play, have prevented what might have been, in the hands of a more serious and larger minded dramatist, a most important handling of a new theme in a new way.

When he wrote *The Rival Fools* (1709), Cibber seemed, if one may judge from the prologue, to feel that his efforts for reform were not meeting with sufficient response and appreciation, and therefore tells the audience that

"All sorts of Men and Manners may  
From these last Scenes go unprov'd away.  
From late Experience taught, we slight th' old Rule  
Of Profit with Delight: This Play's—All Fool."

But though this comedy is not didactic in its purpose, it is morally clean in its action.

In *The Non-Juror* (1717), a play written with an avowedly political purpose, he cannot avoid moralizing and sentimentality, qualities which appear slightly in the story of Charles, and in the relations of Dr. Wolf to Lady Woodvil and Maria. It cannot be claimed that the play has any important bearing on sentimental comedy, however.

*The Refusal* (1721) might be called a purified Restoration comedy, without any positive bearing on the sentimentalizing tendency except that it shows the tendency to make the drama more moral.

*The Provoked Husband* (1728), Cibber's completion of Vanbrugh's *A Journey to London*, is typically sentimental in treatment, with the happy ending, the reformation of the vicious, and the true but dull expression of moral sentiments by the serious characters. In it Cibber has departed from Vanbrugh's original intention by reforming the wife, whom he has preserved as perfectly true to her husband, though unduly given to gambling. In the love affair of Mr. Manly and Lord Townley's sister we likewise have sentimental treatment, and in the expression of pious thoughts no one could be more prolific than Mr. Manly. In this play Cibber does not strike any note he has not used before; it is merely sig-

nificant of the permanence of the changed manner of writing in English comedy generally.

In the first plot Cibber has somewhat softened the characters of Vanbrugh's Lord and Lady Loverule in Lord and Lady Townley, giving to the husband a much less dictatorial and more sentimental and uxorious character. Lady Townley, though she does not show any signs of softer qualities, is made to see the error of her course of late hours and gambling, and undergoes a somewhat improbable but characteristic conversion. Cibber tells us<sup>85</sup> that it had been Vanbrugh's intention to turn the lady out of doors, as would have been natural and logical, giving to the play a serious interest which it lacks under Cibber's management.

The characters are shorn of their rough virility in Cibber's version. Squire Richard is a sort of rough study of the Tony Lumpkin type,—without his wit, however,—but the credit of the portrayal is due to Vanbrugh rather than to Cibber.

While the play is far from lacking in interest and power to amuse, there is a very decided inferiority to Vanbrugh's play, even in its unfinished and imperfect state. Cibber's play is a typical sentimental comedy, with its undeserved happy ending, reformation of the vicious, and commonplace expression of sentiment and morals on the part of the serious characters.

Although it does not exhibit any startling new qualities, in its theme attacking the evils of gambling which Cibber has previously attacked, the play is a good example of eighteenth century comedy; fully as good, indeed, as the work of the other dramatists of the time, but suffering in comparison with Cibber's own best work.

It may be interesting to note that Cibber is said to have added the parts of Tom and Phillis to Steele's *Conscious Lovers*.<sup>86</sup> When Steele submitted this play to him, Cibber felt that it would not satisfy the desire of an audience to laugh at a comedy. According to the account in *The Lives of the Poets*, Steele gladly accepted Cibber's suggestion that a comic action be inserted and even proposed that Cibber make such additions to the play as he saw fit. The absence of humor is a mark of the form of sentimental comedy inaugurated by Steele, while the form represented by Cibber's work is closer to the Restoration type, is indeed really a modifica-

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85. *To the Reader, The Provoked Husband.*

86. Cibber's *Lives of the Poets*, IV, 120; Wilks, *A General View of the Stage*, p. 42.

tion of that type, and the element of humor is consequently found in it.

#### 8. TYPICAL QUALITY OF CIBBER'S WORK.

Cibber's work typifies the change that was going on in the moral reformation of the drama, as it likewise shows the development characteristic of the time in other elements of the drama.<sup>87</sup> In him, as in others, we see that while the general type of Restoration comedy was adopted in the construction of the plot, there was a tendency to simplify the plot. Moreover, Cibber further departed from the Restoration type by the selection of themes other than mere sex relations. Other dramatists were able to present such themes without reference to moral degeneration, but Cibber, when he takes such a subject as the dangers of gambling, for instance, cannot entirely avoid dealing with sex immorality.

In the dull, chaste lover, the sober, moral, worthy gentleman who is largely a result of the sentimental tendency in the drama, such as Lord Morelove in *Woman's Wit* and Elder Worthy in *Love's Last Shift*, Cibber developed and made more important a type which had appeared but had been relatively unimportant in earlier drama. In the comedy of Steele and his followers this character was further developed so that it became the central figure. Cibber and his predecessors seem to have been guided by some such formula as that interesting personality and morality appear in inverse ratio in male characters.

The precocious Miss Prue type, the young woman who is destined to have a lover or a husband, perhaps both, in a short time, is represented by Miss Jenny in *The Provoked Husband* and Miss Notable in *The Lady's Last Stake*. This type of character soon disappeared from the drama, as did likewise the Millamant kind of coquette, who appears as Maria in *The Non-Juror* and as Lady Betty in *The Careless Husband*. Snap and Trappanti are typical menservants, witty and graceless, and we find the mercenary serving woman in *The Provoked Husband* and *She Would and She Would Not*. Characters of this type continue occasionally in the succeeding drama, where they furnish the comic relief.

#### 9. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CIBBER'S COMEDIES.

Cibber's themes are taken from contemporary life and its more obvious problems. Of course so far as any serious purpose

87. R. M. Alden, *Prose in the English Drama, Modern Philology*, VII, 4.



is concerned, a distinction must be made between those plays designed merely to afford the pleasure of an evening's entertainment and those written with more serious intent. Cibber often distinguishes between these two classes, and frankly states his purpose in the prologue or dedication to the separate plays.

His attitude toward his audience is somewhat naïve. He frankly states that his "sole dependence being the judgment of an audience, 'twere madness to provoke them."<sup>88</sup> He again says<sup>89</sup> that "every guest is a judge of his own palate; and a poet ought no more to impose good sense upon the galleries, than dull farce upon undisputed judges. I first considered who my guests were, before I prepared my entertainment." This would seem to indicate that at times he had no high respect for his audiences; especially when he wrote *The School Boy* and *Hob in the Well*, if the latter is by him. In this connection one may note that he consciously distinguished stage and closet drama, and made no attempt to write the latter. In his "Remarks to the Reader" of *Ximena* he says, "though the reader must be charmed by the tenderness of the characters in the original, I have ventured to alter, to make them more agreeable to the spectator." These statements would seem to indicate that Cibber wrote his sentimental plays because he thought the audiences desired something of the sort.

As a playwright Cibber was a strong upholder of religion and the established church. He points out that the only religious sect to close the theatre was also opposed to the established church.<sup>90</sup> But in treating religious subjects he does not use the Puritans for dramatic material, for they were no longer a political menace, but he turns to the Roman Catholics, whose activities were not merely religious, but political. In *The Non-Juror* we have a play almost entirely built on anti-Catholic feeling; in *King John* we have another attack on the Church of Rome; and in the fourth act of *Woman's Wit* we again have satire, but in this case primarily of the Catholic clergy, rather than the church itself. We do not have any references to party politics, aside from this Catholic problem.

His original plays in comedy, other than farces and operas, deal with moral problems. In the case of *Love's Last Shift*

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88. *Preface to Woman's Wit.*

89. *Dedication of Love's Last Shift.*

90. *Dedication of Love Makes a Man.*



and *The Careless Husband* we have presented the reformation of husbands not yet entirely spoiled at heart; in *The Provoked Husband* the reformation of a wife who has not committed any serious breach of the moral code; and in this last, as well as in *The Lady's Last Stake*, we have plays dealing with the evils resulting from women's gambling. It is curious to find one who was so notorious a gambler as Cibber choosing such a theme.

The language shows great change from that of the Restoration in regard to moral refinement. Cibber's plays become less and less coarse in speech. His earlier plays have a grossness almost equal to that of Restoration comedy, but gradually grow purer. This change in the language is found in English comedy generally, and as it progresses a new element enters, the expression of moral sentiments, extravagantly and artificially stated. This last shows a gradual increase, reaching its height in the later sentimental comedy of the middle of the century.

Merely as literature, three of Cibber's plays, at least, are well worth while: *The Careless Husband*, *She Would and She Would Not*, and *The Non-Juror*. They lack the briskness and sureness of touch that characterized Congreve, but compare most favorably with the work of men in the next rank, and are not only delightful and profitable reading, but are thoroughly representative of the period in which they appear. Grouped with these as possessing permanent literary value are the *Apology* and not more than half a dozen songs. Outside of these three plays, one prose work, and a few songs, Cibber produced nothing that is worth preserving because of its merit as literature. His greatest importance to the student of literary history lies in his contribution to the development of sentimental comedy.

#### 10. PLACE OF STEELE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENTIMENTAL COMEDY.

In view of the place that is always given to Steele as the originator of sentimental comedy, a discussion of any phase of the subject would be incomplete without at least a reference to his relation to the particular question under discussion. We may grant that Cibber does not represent the culmination of the sentimental type: that is to be found in Steele's *Conscious Lovers* (1722). He is, rather, the most prominent figure in the first stage of the development of sentimental comedy, during which the Restoration type

was transformed by the addition of a moral purpose, by the purification of the language, and by the addition of the pathetic element; so that the new form in his hands has much of the old as well as the new, while Steele's *Conscious Lovers* has almost entirely broken away from the old and looks forward. But the movement in which Cibber was so prominent a figure did make the way possible and contributed the most important elements which later developed in the hands of Steele and his followers.

A commonplace of literary history is that it was Steele who purged English comedy of its vileness and was the first to write sentimental comedy. This, as we have seen, is not true; for though *The Conscious Lovers* is probably the best of its type, it merely lays more stress upon the pathetic element and carries forward another step the sort of thing that Cibber had done in such comedies as *The Careless Husband* and *The Lady's Last Stake*, which are as truly sentimental comedies as this, and which possess the pathetic interest, but in a less marked degree. In Steele's other plays, *The Funeral* (1701), *The Lying Lover* (1705), *The Tender Husband* (1705), Steele, except in the matter of the purity of the language, does not show as fully developed examples of the type as does Cibber in his work of the same period and earlier.

Steele's first play to be acted, *The Funeral*, lacks sentimental quality; it is merely a comedy which, when compared to the Restoration type, has a higher moral tone. Steele had no higher motive, he tells us, in writing this play than the purpose of reinstating himself in the opinion of his fellow soldiers who had ostracized him as a moral prig after the appearance of *The Christian Hero* (1701). In his preface he mentions two themes as those around which the comedy is written, namely, the practices of undertakers and "legal villanies." Lady Brumpton, who had bigamously married Lord Brumpton, is discredited by being ejected from Lord Brumpton's household, but there is no suggestion that she is in any way reformed, and in the rest of the action none of the other elements of sentimental comedy are prominent.

*The Lying Lover* goes a little further and reforms the hero at the end, as is done in the comedies of Cibber. But even this similarity is only superficial, for the hero is not really vicious, being guilty only of some entertaining lying, and the reformation is brought about, not by approved sentimental feminine means,

but by the fact that the hero finds himself in prison. But even though the hero is humiliated by temporary imprisonment, his delinquencies are so diverting that the reader is entirely in sympathy with him. Our sympathy for him, indeed, is so great that it is a distinct disappointment that the lady is given to the honest and jealous lover instead of to him. Steele lays no claim to originality in the reform, "compunction and remorse" of his hero, for in his preface he says that such things had been "frequently applauded on the stage." Nor is the versifying of the elevated portions of the play a new thing; it is found both earlier and later than sentimental comedy and is not a distinctive mark of that type.

*The Tender Husband* was indebted to Cibber's *Careless Husband*, which had recently appeared, but is not to be compared to it in its sentimental qualities. In both plays, however, we have the reconciliation of an estranged husband and wife. In Cibber it is the husband who is the offender, and he is recalled from his vices by the patient fidelity of his wife; a reformation based on sentiment. In *The Tender Husband*, the wife is reformed from extravagance in her expenditure of time and money on trivialities, and from failure in her duty to her husband, but the reformation is brought about by a mere trick that the husband plays upon the wife rather than by the interaction of personality on personality. Steele shows nothing of the serious grasp of the situation that Cibber shows in his play on the same theme, *The Provoked Husband*. Steele's handling is distinctly less artistic and distinctly less sentimental than in either of Cibber's plays. This is seen also in Steele's light treatment of the wife's equivocal action toward Fainlove, whom she mistakenly supposes to be a man, and toward whom she makes questionable advances. Not only in regard to such situations as this, but in the attitude toward actual breaches of morality, Steele shows a lower standard than Cibber. In both *The Careless Husband* and *The Tender Husband* the hero keeps a mistress, but while Cibber brings the illicit amour to an end with the disgrace of the mistress and a distinct moral, Steele not only shows none of this disapproval but provides the mistress with a husband of means and gives her a good dowry. ' 4

Seventeen years later, though according to Genest<sup>91</sup> the play had been written some years before it was acted, Steele produced

91. III, 100.

his fully developed comedy of the sentimental type, *The Conscious Lovers*. It is entirely different from the preceding plays, for instead of containing a lively intrigue with clever satire and wit, such as we have in *The Lying Lover*, the tone throughout is fixed by the pathetic and didactic elements. Steele rightly felt that he was doing something new, and took credit to himself in the prologue:

“But the bold sage—the poet of tonight—  
By new and desperate rules resolved to write.

’Tis yours with breeding to refine the age,  
To chasten wit, and moralise the stage.”

Not only does this moral and sentimental note appear throughout, but in Mr. Sealand, especially in his dialogue with Sir John Bevil in the fourth act, there appears the exaltation of the tradesman class which culminated in the work of Lillo. Bevil Junior is a pattern of propriety and goodness, but his lack of virility and brilliance contrasts him most disadvantageously with the heroes of the preceding period. He is the dull, chaste lover, the hero of the second intrigue of the Restoration and Cibber type of comedy, the Lord Morelove sort, exalted to the first place. Indiana is the patient Griselda type, the Lady Easy sort of person, but in *The Conscious Lovers* her gentleness and goodness are not used to recall the erring, but are presented merely as desirable qualities for a virtuous young woman to possess. The witty rake has disappeared. The Wildairs, Lovelesses, Millamants, and Lady Betties are no more, and in their places are maudlin, sickly sentimentalists, whose goodness and sufferings are all that commend them. Parson Adams was right, it does contain “some things almost solemn enough for a sermon.”

This sentimental didacticism becomes still more conspicuous in the work of Holcroft and his school, whose plays are rendered degenerate and emasculate thereby. If the historians of literature mean that Steele was the originator of this type, whose essential characteristic is the centering of the action around a pathetic situation, they are probably right; but any statement that it was he who introduced the sentimental or pathetic element into English comedy, or that he began the reformation of the drama in the direction of morality, is easily seen to be false by a comparison of his work with the earlier and contemporary work of Cibber.

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Fame then was cheap, and the first comer sped:  
Which they have since preserved by being dead. Dryden.

liberius si

Dixero quid, si forte jocosius, hoc mihi juris  
Cum venia dabis. Hor. Sat. 4. L 1. London, 1751.

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